



STYLIANOS ALEXIOU

MINOAN CIVILIZATION

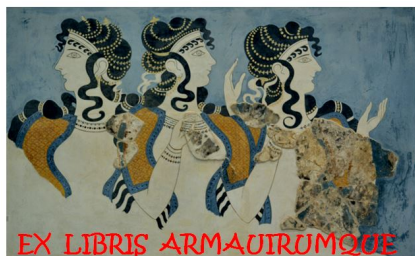


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MINOAN CIVILIZATION

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CRESSIDA RIDLEY

SIXTH REVISED EDITION



HERACLION

Mr. Stylianos Alexiou, professor emeritus of the University of Crete, ex-Curator General of Antiquities, is a corresponding member of the Academy of Athens, member of the Archaeological Society, the German Institute, and honorary professor of the University of Padova and Cyprus. He discovered the late Minoan cemetery at the harbour town of Knossos, and the early Minoan vaulted tombs at Lebena (Leda). He is credited with the creation of a new wing at the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion, as well as with the Hall of the Giamalakis' Collection. He also established the museums of Khania and of Aghios Nikolaos. He published numerous papers in Greek and international journals, and is also credited with such publications as *Erotokritos*, *Apokopos*, *Voskopoula*, *Digenis Akritas*, *Solomos*. He also increased our knowledge of life on Crete in the period 15th-17th century with publications about the society and culture of Crete. Other works of Mr. Alexiou concern issues of historical linguistics and the etymology of words in the Cretan idiom and the modern Greek language.

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HERAKLION CRETE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON MINOAN CHRONOLOGY

Sir Arthur Evans, excavator of the Palace of Knossos and founder of Minoan archaeology, introduced a tripartite chronological system for Minoan studies, consisting of Early Minoan, Middle Minoan and Late Minoan, each divided into three phases (E. M. I, II, III etc.) and again sub - divided, where necessary, into two sub - phases, as, for example, L. M. IA and IB. This system was based on the development of the pottery styles. After Hazzidakis, Franchet and Aberg had subjected Evans's system to severe criticism, as over - schematic and partly incorrect, a different system, developed in detail lately by N. Platon, tends to be adopted. This takes into account not merely the pottery, but also the chief stages in the life of the palaces, their building, destruction, rebuilding and final catastrophe. These represent the most important events in Minoan history and are deduced from stratigraphical evidence. The new chronological system, based on these data, runs as follows :

Neolithic Period	? — 2600 B. C.
Pre - palatial Period	2600 — 2000 B. C.
Proto - palatial Period	2000 — 1700 B. C.
Neo - palatial Period	1700 — 1400 B. C.
Post - palatial Period	1400 — 1100 B. C.

The period from the introduction of copper until the building of the first palaces at Knossos, Phaestos and Mallia is described as Pre - palatial. The Proto - palatial period covers the time from their erection until the first great destruction (circa 1700 B. C.). Neo - palatial runs from the rebuilding immediately after this disaster to the final catastrophe at Knossos, shortly after 1400. The following Post - palatial (or Mycenaean) period, during which the three palaces seem to have been deserted, ends with the Dorian conquest about 1100 B. C.

The new nomenclature corresponds with that of Evans as follows :

Pre - palatial Period	{	Early Minoan I
		Early Minoan II
		Early Minoan III
		Middle Minoan IA
Proto - palatial Period	{	Middle Minoan IB
		Middle Minoan II
Neo - palatial Period	{	Middle Minoan III
		Late Minoan I
		Late Minoan II
Post - palatial Period		Late Minoan III

The absolute date in years of the various Minoan periods is based on synchronisms with ancient Egypt, where the chronology is adequately known thanks to the survival of inscriptions. We deduce these correspondences from Egyptian objects discovered in Crete, and conversely from Cretan imports into Egypt : such finds are obviously contemporary with the levels in which they appear. Thus Proto - palatial period is thought to be roughly contemporary with the XIIth Dynasty, because fragments of Kamares Ware, attributed to M. M. II, have been found at Kahun in Egypt, in the habitation refuse of a settlement founded on the occasion of the erection of the royal pyramids of this dynasty. One Kamares vase also was found in a contemporary tomb at Abydos. The beginning of the Neo - palatial period must coincide with the Hyksos epoch, since the lid of a stone vessel bearing the cartouche of the Hyksos Pharaoh Khyan was discovered in M. M. III levels at Knossos. Equally, the subsequent Neo - palatial period falls within the chronological limits of the New Kingdom, with particular reference to the XVIIIth Dynasty : an alabaster amphora with the cartouche of Tuthmosis III was found in a tomb of the final palatial period at Katsaba. Other contemporary Egyptian stone vases were discovered in a L. M. II tomb at Isopata, while corresponding Neo - palatial vases, such as jugs and alabastra, imported into Egypt, tell the same story. Pictorial representation of Cretans, the famous *Kephti*, as the Egyptians called them, carrying zoomorphic

rhyta (ritual vases for pouring libations) and other works of art typical of the Neo - palatial period, as gifts from Crete, decorate the tombs of dignitaries of the same dynasty. Finally, fragments of Post - palatial pottery, found in the palace of Amenophis IV or Akhenaton at Amarna (inhabited from 1375 B. C.) help to determine the beginning of the Post - palatial era, and also the date of the destruction of the palace, since similar pottery, but thought to be rather earlier in style, was found on its floors.

There is further, rather less definite, evidence for cross - dating. The presence of Egyptian stone bowls of Pre - dynastic or Old Kingdom date in a final Neolithic context at Knossos; the discovery of stone vessels of Old Kingdom type in Pre - palatial (E. M. II) tombs at Mokhlos; and of XIIth Dynasty scarabs in a context dating from the end of the Pre - palatial period at Lebena, fall in this category. The uncertainty in these cases arises from the fact that it is impossible to date the Egyptian objects exactly, since they bear no inscriptions. A cylinder seal of the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi (from circa 1790 B. C.) was found in an E. M. II - M. M. I tholos tomb at Platanos. Proto - palatial pottery found in Syria would appear to corroborate the absolute date of this period.

It should be noted that the absolute time scale in Egypt and Mesopotamia is not immutable: if, as a result of more up - to - date research, this has to be altered, it will bring with it corresponding modifications in Cretan dates. Lately, a tendency can be noticed towards the lowering of these chronologies.

MINOAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER 1.

THE NEOLITHIC AND THE PRE-PALATIAL PERIOD

No trace of human life earlier than the Neolithic epoch has yet been discovered in Crete. Cretan archaeology therefore begins with the Neolithic epoch, the end of which can be set at about the beginning, or according to some opinions, the middle, of the third millennium B. C. It is more difficult to fix its beginning, since the date of circa 8.000 B. C. proposed by Evans now seems an exaggerated estimate. The characteristic Neolithic traits, in Crete as elsewhere, are the introduction of agriculture, the building of houses, the use of more developed stone tools, well finished and polished, in contrast to those of the Paleolithic epoch, as well as the appearance of pottery. The three phases : Early, Middle and Late, into which Evans divided the Cretan Neolithic, are based on differences in the pottery. The people of Neolithic Crete lived in caves, such as those at Miamou; Eileithya, near Amnisos; Trapeza; Karnari, on Mt. Iukta; and the caves of Akroteri, near Khania and Gerani near Rethymno. At the same time, they built primitive dwellings of almost unworked stones, bricks and branches. Remains of such houses have been found at Knossos, Phaestos, Katsaba, and at Magasa in East Crete. For burying the dead they used caves and hollows in the rock, in some cases, as at Katsaba, very close to the houses.

The stone tools and weapons consist usually of single bladed axes and hammers or maces, made from river pebbles. The maces have a central boring for the haft. There are also blades of obsidian from Melos as well as bone tools.

The pottery was hand-made, not thrown on the wheel, and fired in an open hearth rather than a kiln. The commonest shape is a simple open bowl. During the Early Neolithic

phase the pots are rough and plain; in the Middle Neolithic they are burnished and decorated with incised designs, usually chevrons, grooves, zig-zags and dots, filled with white paste. Sometimes, as a result of uneven firing, the surface has red and black blotches. The burnish was obtained by rubbing the surface of the pot after firing. During the Late Neolithic, the pottery ceased to be decorated, but frequently shows red-black variegation. The shapes, too, develop, into closed bowls with wide necks. A series of vases with painted decoration from Phaestos also belong to this phase, and are the earliest examples of this technique. In general, nevertheless, it can be said that the use of colour is unknown in Cretan Neolithic pottery, in contrast to the excellent painted pottery which appears in Thessaly from the end of the fifth millennium B. C. Wooden vessels and utensils must surely also have existed.

The presence of Neolithic figurines, representing obese female shapes, some with only rough indications of head and arms, others, more naturalistic, suggests that the Great Goddess, whom we meet in the following periods, was already worshipped in Crete. There are also votive offerings in the form of small scale clay models of animals and birds.

The paucity of complete Neolithic skulls prevents any certainty about the racial affinities of the Cretan population of this period. The livelihood of the islanders depended upon agriculture, including stock-breeding (domesticated cattle, sheep and goats were already known to them), but they also fished, and hunted wild animals, and undertook sea voyages to the neighbouring islands of Dia, Gaudos and the Cyclades.

Sometime during the middle of the third millenium B. C. — opinions still differ as to the exact date — groups of people from Asia Minor migrated to the Cyclades, Crete and the Greek mainland. The newcomers introduced the first know-

ledge of bronze to these regions. Only Thessaly remained faithful to the Neolithic tradition. Probably the place names ending -*nthos*, -*ssos*, -*tos*, — as in *Corinthos*, *Knossos*, *Phaestos*, *Lykabettos*, common both in Asia Minor and in Greece, spread at the same time. Certain names such as *Olympus*, *Ida*, *Berekynthos*, *Inatos*, *Lykastos*, *Tarra*, are identical in the two countries. It is not possible to derive the etymology of these place names from the Greek language; consequently the speakers of the language to which they belong cannot have been Greeks, although Indo-European connections are not excluded. More precisely, the suggestion has been made, though it has not yet gained acceptance, that the place names ending in -*ssos* can be identified as Lu-vian, an Indo-European tongue spoken in S. W. Asia Minor, in which the element -*ss* indicates a possessive case. As a rule, we describe the inhabitants of Greek lands before the arrival of the Hellenes, in conventional terms as Pre-Hellenes and Aegeans; the anthropologist assigns them to the Mediterranean race, characterized by dolichocephaly, and black hair and eyes. This Pre-Hellenic race is not related either to the Semites or the ancient Egyptians. In the special case of Crete, Evans believed that beside the influx from W. Asia, which mingled with the original Neolithic inhabitants of the island, there were also settlers from Libya, on the basis of certain traits common to the two regions.

The introduction of copper, and its use in tools and weapons put an end to the primitive Neolithic way of life in Crete. A new period began, characterized by vigorous developments in seafaring, and in foreign relations. Contacts with Egypt, where civilization was further advanced than in Crete, since it had been flourishing since the Old Kingdom of the pyramids, but also with Asia Minor, and through it with Mesopotamia, benefited the development of Minoan culture. These influences, however, did not prevent it from becoming a wholly original and indigenous growth.

Early in the new period the survival of Sub - Neolithic traits can still be traced. The black pottery of the Pyrgos style (so called after a site near the sea, east of Herakleion, where a burial in a natural rock cavity, containing pottery of this type was discovered) is reminiscent of Neolithic pottery, even though the shapes are later in character. Instead of painted decoration we find pattern burnish; in this technique, by rubbing certain parts only of the pot surface with the burnishing tool, the contrasting glossy and matt areas were made to form various ornamental designs; bands, semi - circles, lattices and so on. So far as the shapes of the pots are concerned, they show connections with the Cyclades; typical are the «pyxides», small cylindrical and globular pots with lids and perforated protuberances or stringhole lugs. Typical, too, are the large goblets, resembling chalices, found chiefly at Pyrgos, and the vases from Partira with horn - like excrescences. On the other hand, pottery in the Haghios Onouphrios style, called after the site in the Mesara where it was discovered, is decorated in a new way, with lines in red paint, usually vertical and converging at the base of the pot. Shapes such as the round bottomed, beak - spouted jugs and vases shaped like birds or animals are often decorated in this style.

The appearance in Crete of marble figurines of a new type is another sign of connections with the Cyclades, where similar figurines appear, occasionally on a much larger scale. In Crete, the Cycladic idols are small, and always portray naked female figures, with arms crossed over the breast. They probably represent divinities. There are also other varieties of anthropomorphic figurines; those in bone, mostly from Trapeza in Lasithi, seem to belong to a local style. But other, more primitive examples in stone, crudely fashioned with pointed bases, from the Mesara, call to mind Proto - Libyan and Pre - dynastic Egyptian prototypes.

The dead continued to be buried in rock cavities, at Kyparissi near Heracleion, at Zakro and Palaikastro, although simultaneously the first vaulted tombs make their appearance

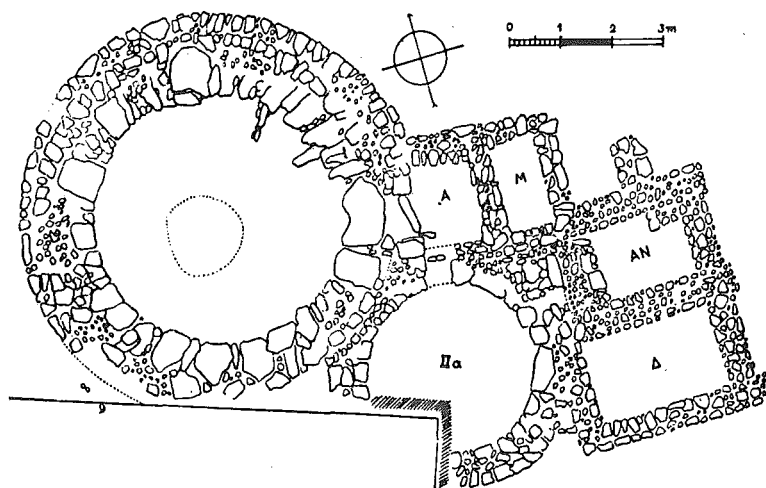


Fig. 1. — Vaulted tombs at Lebena.

at Lebena and Kراسي. These are kiln-shaped structures with corbelled roofing, i.e. built so that each successive course of stones projects slightly further inwards than its predecessor, until finally the overlapping courses meet overhead, thus closing the vault. Since the roofs of the tombs have fallen in, some doubt has arisen as to whether these tombs, 16-32 feet in diameter, were really corbelvaulted, and it has been suggested that they had flat wooden roofs. But the circular plan; the thickness of the surviving walls; the internal batter of the walls; the fact that remains of earlier burials were consumed in great fires lit within these tombs, in order to make room for new arrivals; and various observations concerning the position of stones fallen from the roof show that these tombs were in fact roofed with

stone corbelling and not with wooden beams. It seems likely that they were the forerunners of the more highly developed but similarly corbelled Mycenaean tholoi (beehive tombs) found in Mainland Greece. The vaulted tombs of Crete, which Evans derives from Libyan prototypes, were the property of a whole village clan, and were used as places of collective burial over a long period of time. This type of tomb spreads a little later (EM II) to the Mesara, as at Platanos, Koumasa, Porti and Aghia Triadha, and

as far as the district of Seteia (Myrsini). At Palaikastro and Mokhlos tombs are found consisting of groups of rectangular chambers lying side by side, also known as ossuaries. The same type is found at Archanes and Gournes.

It seems that caves, such as Miamou, Eileithyia, Arkalokhori, Trapeza, and Platyvola in west Crete were still inhabited during Pre-palatial times, but remains of EM II dwellings discovered at Vasiliki near Hierapetra show immense progress when compared with the

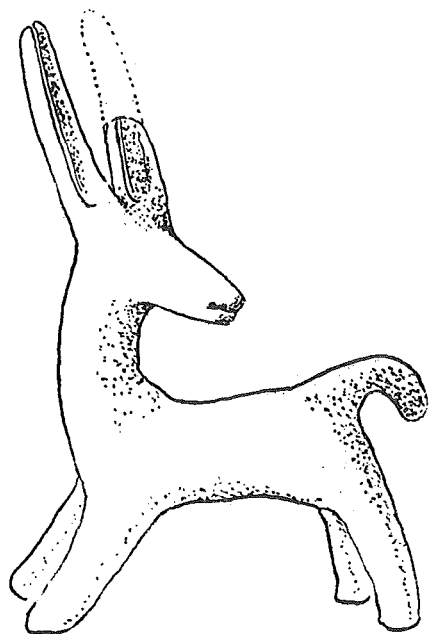


Fig. 2. — Votive animal from the tombs of Mesara.

primitive huts of the Neolithic epoch. These houses had strong walls thickly coated with plaster, doorways, and were regularly divided into separate rooms. Vasiliki is also the principal source of a new type of pottery later than the Pyrgos and Aghios Onouphrios styles; its deco-

ration exploits the effect of uneven firing. Vessels in the Vasiliki style : jugs, long - spouted «tea - pots», pedestalled cups and so on, have a mottled or flecked surface caused by fluctuations in the fierceness of the firing. At the end of the Pre - palatial period polychrome decoration appears foreshadowing the famous Kamares style of the subsequent phase. The motifs though still simple were no longer exclusively rectilinear; the spiral, later to become the principal theme of Minoan decoration, was now introduced into the repertory of painted designs. According to one theory the spiral designs should be attributed to influence from the so - called «Bandkeramik» of the Danube basin, which was transmitted to the Cyclades, where stone pyxides with spiral ornament are found. But this connexion remains far from certain; in Crete the earliest examples of spiral ornament occur on sealstones and stone vases. It seems more probable that spiral decoration was due to oriental influence, and to the techniques of oriental jewellery in particular, where the decorative use of the spiral in coiled gold wire appears at an early date. A special class of black ware decorated in yellowish - white is found mainly in East Crete. The polychrome decoration consisted of white and cherry - red paint on a black background. The potter's wheel and kiln became well known at this stage.

A recently excavated settlement on the coast near Myrtos, south - west of Vasiliki, has produced many vases in Vasiliki and dark on light painted wares. This proto - urban village has given much useful information for Early Minoan agriculture, industry and religion : extensive olive farming and vine cultivation were practised, cereals grown and cattle, sheep, goats and pigs kept; a pottery - maker's workshop had potter's wheels on the floor; loomweights and spindle whorls indicated textile production; engraved sealstones were carved. One room in the settlement was a shrine with a pottery figure of a goddess. The architectural plan of the

site shows it as the forerunner of Late Minoan towns like Gournia. The Myrtos settlement was destroyed by fire c. 2200 B. C.

The growth of seafaring and the contacts with Egypt enabled the Cretans to adopt the techniques of stone - working

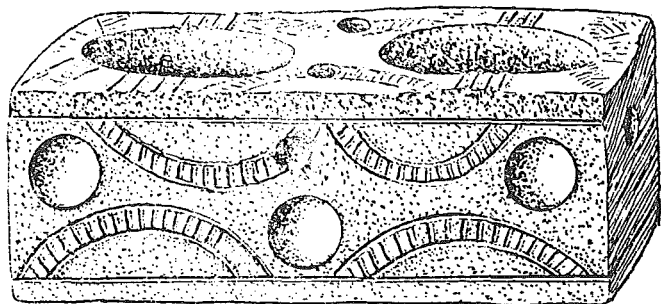


Fig. 3. — Stone «Kernos» from Mesara for double offerings.

and of the manufacture of stone vessels. The basic shape was obtained by hammering and chiselling to remove superfluous parts of the stone; then came the hollowing - out of the interior by means of a tubular wooden drill carrying wet sand as an abrasive, followed by the polishing obtained by a long and patient process of grinding, again with sand. Native Cretan rocks such as steatite, stalagmite, gypsum, schist, serpentine were used in the manufacture of the remarkable vases which accompanied the dead to the tomb. An outstanding group of these vessels comes from the tombs on the islet of Mokhlos, near Seteia. The artistry and variety of the shapes, which are nearly all Cretan, although in a few instances they attempt imitation of Egyptian prototypes, and the skill of the craftsman in shaping the vessel so as to exploit the natural veining of the stone deserve the highest admiration. The bowls from the Mesara tombs are simpler and often seem to be cult vessels : bird's nest bowls and «Kernoi» of the «salt - cellar» type for double or multiple offerings, and various kinds of cups.

For the making of gold diadems, hair - pins, necklaces.

delicate chains and animal figurines gold was imported from the Egyptian mines of Sinai, the Arabian desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, as well as from Asia Minor. Jewellery was worn by both men and women, but the necklaces no longer consisted of clay beads as at the be-

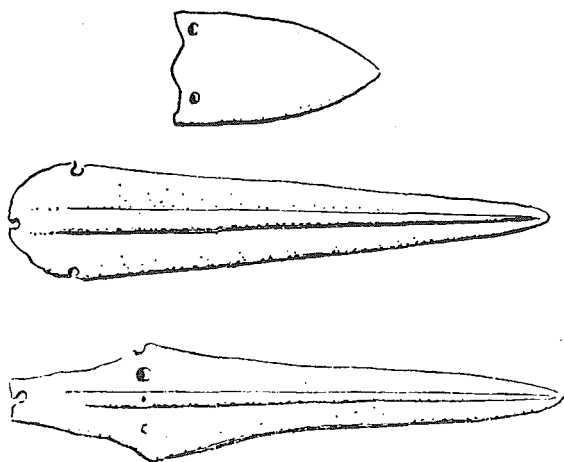


Fig. 4. — Bronze daggers from the tombs of Mesara.

ginning of the Pre - palatial period, but of semi - precious stones. The rock crystal native to Crete, purple amethyst, red carnelian, provided the raw material for beads of varied shapes, while poorer folk wore necklaces made of commoner minerals. Faience beads are also found : the technique of their manufacture must surely have been introduced into Crete from Egypt. Like the stone bowls, the jewellery of the Pre - palatial period is also known from the tombs of the Mesara and the Mokhlos cemetery.

Copper was first used only for the making of small, almost triangular daggers but later was alloyed with tin, which was surely not brought from the distant Iberian peninsula or from still more distant Britain but more probably from Asia Minor via Troy.

The resulting bronze was used to make daggers of a more elongated shape often strengthened with a midrib. Silver, per-

haps from the Cyclades (Siphnos) or from Cilicia, was also employed, though rarely, in the manufacture of daggers. It should be noted that Crete does possess copper on the Asterousia and perhaps at Chrysokamino near the sea east of Pachyammos. But copper must certainly

also have been imported from Cyprus and Asia Minor.



Fig. 5. — Ivory seal in form of a dove, with her nestlings.

Sealstones too make their first appearance in Crete in the second Pre-palatial phase. Here is yet a further proof of the connexion between Crete and the Middle East and Syria, where

comparable sealstones occur. These seals were mainly used as a safeguard on the fastening of chests and doors: they were impressed on lumps of damp clay attached to fine strings used for tying up the object needing protection. Some sealstones, however, were most probably suspended round the neck or wrist of their owner as amulets, for their power of averting evil. The sealstones were made of soft material such as bone, steatite and ivory brought from Syria or Egypt, but eventually hard semi-precious stones came into use. The usual shapes include rings, stamp-seals, button-seals, cones, prisms and, more rarely, cylinders. Sometimes they are carved in the shape of living creatures; such as monkeys, lions, bulls and birds. The flat surface may be incised with lines, crosses, stars or S-shaped and spiral patterns as well as with representations of animals and human beings. Hieroglyphic symbols which are found on the sealstones from the end of the Pre-palatial period onward show that a form of writing was already well known.

CHAPTER 2.

THE PERIOD OF THE OLD PALACES

PALACES, SETTLEMENTS AND TOMBS

About 2000, a momentous event took place. For the first time, buildings large enough to deserve the name of palaces were erected, at Knossos, Phaestos and Mallia. The founding of these palaces surely resulted from the creation of strong central authorities in the relevant regions, and it is obvious that great power had become concentrated in the hands of the local princes of the time, who later developed into true kings and founders of dynasties. Nor is it by chance that the great palaces are all three situated in the most fertile plains of the island; without doubt, their rulers were great land - owners. The ample magazines for agricultural products such as wheat, wine and olive oil, sometimes stored in vast jars (pithoi) afford the proof.

The execution of major works such as the levelling of the hilltops at Knossos and Phaestos; the raising of great edifices on the levelled areas; and the huge vertical sided cutting into the eastern slope at Knossos are further indications that Minoan society had already achieved a strict division of labour, and had at its disposal a large body of workers. Slavery, already practised in the East, must doubtless have obtained in Crete, too. The quantity and variety of seal impressions discovered in the Old Palace at Phaestos, presumably the property of various officials, shows the presence of a mature and powerful officialdom in the palaces. Moreover, the development of the Hieroglyphic script, and the simultaneous appearance of the first Linear script, to which finds from the palace of Phaestos testify, are another achievement of the period, connected with the bureaucratic system for controlling receipts and outgoings from the store

rooms.

Several of the tholos tombs continued in use, and new tombs of the same type were now erected near Knossos and at Kamilaris, near Phaestos. Burials were still made in the ossuaries at Palaikastro and Mokhlos, and at Khrysolakkos, north of the palace of Mallia, a large enclosure was built containing many small compartments for burials, as well as special places for altars, and cupped offering tables. At the same time single burials in larnakes (clay chests used as coffins) and pithoi became more common, at Pakhyammos and Sphoungaras and at Ailias and Mavro Spelio near Knossos. The new burial customs, especially the final abandonment of collective burial characteristic of the previous period, may signify, as Glotz has conjectured, a gradual weakening of the clan system.

Large parts of the existing palace of Knossos were ascribed by Evans to the Proto-palatial period. At Phaestos we have from this period the west façades and the west court of the palace, the theatral area, some cult places as well as a series of store rooms with thickly plastered walls, reminiscent of the Pre-palatial houses at Vasiliki. One of the Vasiliki houses and a building at Khamaizi, near Seteia in E. Crete, also belong to the beginning of the period. The latter, built on a hilltop, consists of an enclosing wall, oval in plan, with walls abutting on its inner side, thus forming irregular rooms which surround a court with a cistern. Figurines from the rooms, indicate that certain parts of the building were of sacred character.

The houses recently excavated by Poursat in Mallia belong to the final phase of the Proto-palatial period.

POTTERY

The founding of the Old Palaces went hand in hand with a sudden advance in the pottery development. At the beginning of the period, the dominant style was the so-called Barbotine, distinguished by decorative excrescences applied

to the surface of the pot when the clay was still damp. Often this technique is combined with painted polychrome decoration. Later, at the palaces of Knossos and Phaestos, a style of purely palatial character was created, surely by craftsmen employed in the royal workshops. The new pottery, a marvellous development from the polychrome variety of the last Pre-palatial years, is called Kamares ware, after a cave on the southern slope of Mt. Ida, near the present village of that name, where pots of this style were first discovered. The vases, doubtless originally containing liquids and food,



Fig. 6. — Jar of the Kamares style from Phaestos.

were offered to the divinity worshipped in the cave. It seems certain that they came from Phaestos, where large quantities of similar pottery were found in the excavations of the Italian School directed by Doro Levi.

The hallmark of the Kamares style is the fantastically rich proliferation of spiral and curvilinear designs, carried out in red and white on a black ground. The red pigment can vary in shade from cherry or Indian red, typical of the early phase, to orange. The light-on-dark technique is sometimes combined with the reverse, dark-on-light decoration, on one and the same pot. The variety of shapes and of decorative elements is infinite: spirals, tassels, rosettes, circles, ribbons, stripes and lattices. Occasionally the pottery is decorated with flowers, shells and other motifs, moulded in relief; in other instances we find scalloped rims imitating metal vases. There are impressed designs, applied with a stamp

before firing. Now and then the spirals are elongated, to resemble polyps, and fishes are also represented. Here the Marine style of the following period is already

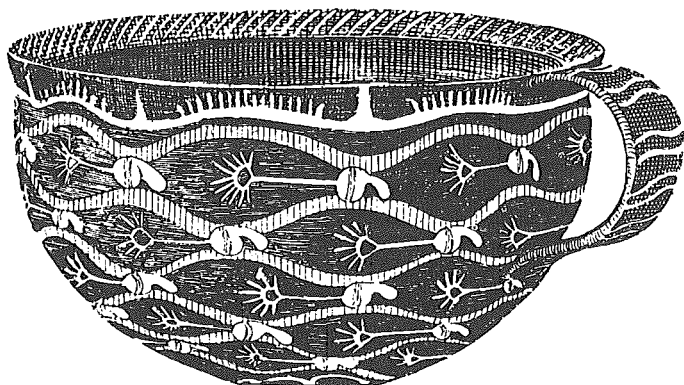


Fig. 7. — «Egg - shell» cup from Knossos.

foreshadowed. Very rarely, we come across highly schematic human figures, divinities, dancers, etc. The human shape was transformed, almost beyond recognition, into an element of design. That this distortion was intentional is proved by the sealings from Phaestos on which living organisms are represented in a naturalistic style. The principal pottery shapes are jugs; cups; fruitstands; pithoi, large and small; less commonly, craters and rhytons are also found. The exquisite Eggshell ware, so named from the extreme thinness of the walls of the pots, usually cups, falls into a class of its own. The fast potter's wheel was already known in the closing years of the previous period : its spread doubtless facilitated the advance in ceramics.

THE OTHER CRAFTS

In contrast, the stone vessels no longer show the variety of Pre - palatial times. However, from the outset of the Pro-

to - palatial period the «blossom bowl» makes its appearance, developing from the bird's nest vase of the end of the preceding period, with the addition of carved leaves encircling the vase like the sepals of a calyx. Some bridge spouted stone jugs, reminiscent of similar shapes in clay from the former era, may belong to our period. Stone lamps are contemporary, and among other finds, Phaestos produced large *keranoi* with multiple hollows, descended from the simpler Early Minoan ones.

Clay figurines, usually schematic and occasionally crude, have been recovered from hilltop shrines such as Petsofas, Iuktas, Traostalos, Asterousia, where they were offered by worshippers. The style of dress shows the fashion of the Old Palace times. The men wore only a tight belt, often with a small dagger stuck through it, and a codpiece. The women, on the other hand, are dressed in long voluminous skirts, and jackets open in front, often with a broad collar with an upstanding peak at the back of the neck. The head is either covered by a broad - brimmed bonnet, or bound by a snood surmounted by the hair piled up in coiled tresses. Just as in the later frescoes, the sex of the figurines is made clear by the colour : red for the men, and white for the women. From the peak sanctuary at Traostalos, near Zakro, came the first bronze figurines of worshippers, similar to those already described. Clay rhytons in the shape of bulls turn up in tombs at Porti and Mokhlos, and in the Palace of Phaestos; animal models, mostly small and usually also of bulls, were found in all the peak sanctuaries referred to above.

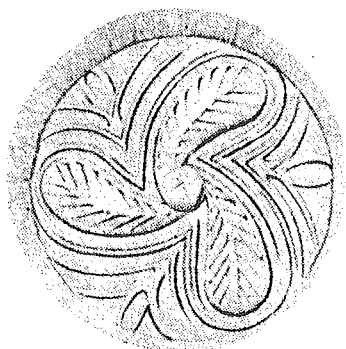


Fig. 8. — Seal impression from Phaestos.

Like architecture and pottery, the craft of gem-cutting or seal carving went ahead by leaps and bounds. Hard semi-precious stones, such as carnelian, agate, rock crystal, jasper, chalcedony, haematite and meteorite came into use. The usual shapes of the seals are the prism, three of four sided, each individual face forming an elongated ellipse; the disk; and the stamp seal, a pear-shaped seal with a small grip. The motifs include hieroglyphic signs; patterns composed of lines or circles; also representational designs. The series of sealings (impressions on clay, as opposed to the sealstone itself)

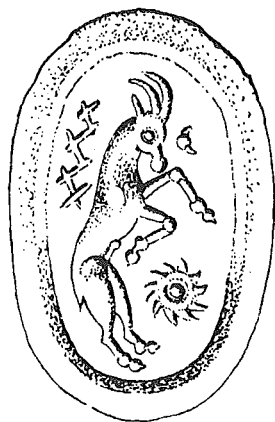


Fig. 9. — Seal with representation of a wild goat.

already mentioned, from the first palace of Phaestos, shows close connexions with the decorative motifs in contemporary Kamares pottery. These sealings inspire admiration for their skilful rendering not only of flowers, but of a variety of animals and insects, and more seldom, human beings, preparing the naturalistic style of the following period. Much simpler and poorer are the designs on a group of steatite seals, mostly prisms, found in a seal-cutter's workshop, west of the palace of Mallia.

Metallurgy, too, made rapid strides. In the Mesara, the dagger with the long blade and midrib developed a projection for the attachment of the wooden hilt, while at Khamaizi appear double axes for everyday use; spearheads, adzes, and chisels. Single bladed axes were found at Palaikastro and votive double axes in the tholos tomb of Platanos in the Mesara. Some of the gold jewellery from the tholos tombs should probably be ascribed to this period. An exquisite gold pendant of this date, found at Khrysolakkos, near Mallia, portrays two bees, depositing a drop of honey in the comb. The bees

are disposed symmetrically on either side of the honeycomb, shown as a disk covered with granulation in gold. This ornament surely has palatial origin. But in general, the palace

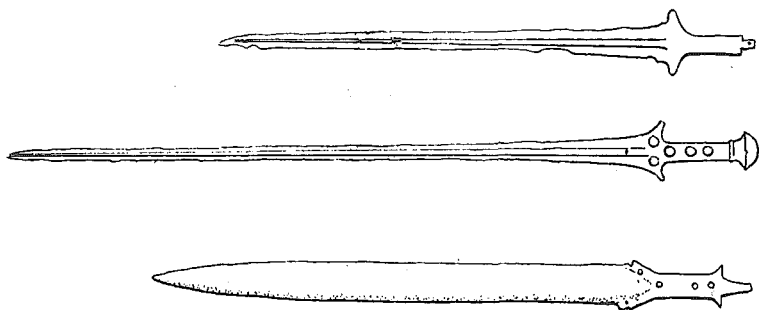


Fig. 10. — Bronze swords of the Neo - palatial period from Knossos and sword of the Post - palatial period from Mouliaana.

of Mallia appears provincial, compared with the palaces of Knossos and Phaestos. Indeed, the magnificent Kamares pottery is rare here.

But the rays of Minoan culture were now felt beyond Crete. It seems that the rulers of Knossos had already laid the foundations of the «Minoan Thalassocracy», or dominion resting on sea - power, echoes of which were preserved in the writings of later Greek authors. Kamares pottery was found in the town of Phylakopi in Melos; most probably a Minoan settlement was already established there. The same pottery has been discovered at Lerna in the Argolid, in Aegina, and on the island of Kouphonesi, south of Crete. No doubt other comparable trading posts, serving shipping and commerce, existed on other islands and at various suitable points on the Aegean coasts. Imports of Proto - palatial pottery in Egypt and Syria, at Byblos and Ugarit, prove connexions between Crete and these countries. Similar contacts existed with Cyprus. Peace and prosperity, the so - called *Pax Minoica* reigned in Crete, shown by the complete absence of fortifications. It seems likely that the ruler

of Knossos was recognized as overlord everywhere in the island. One theory holds that the Cretan palaces do not represent the seats of different kings and princes, but that all belonged to one ruler, that of Knossos, who after the pattern of Oriental monarchs, had palaces in every town, which he visited in turn.

Suddenly, about 1700 B. C., an appalling catastrophe overwhelmed all three palaces. In all likelihood it was caused by an earthquake, since many countries in Western Asia, from the Troad to Central Palestine, were affected at the same time.

CHAPTER 3.

THE PERIOD OF THE NEW PALACES

PALACES, VILLAS, SETTLEMENTS

The catastrophe of 1700 B.C. caused no break in the cultural tradition. The palaces in the three chief centres of Knossos, Phaestos, and Mallia were immediately rebuilt, and

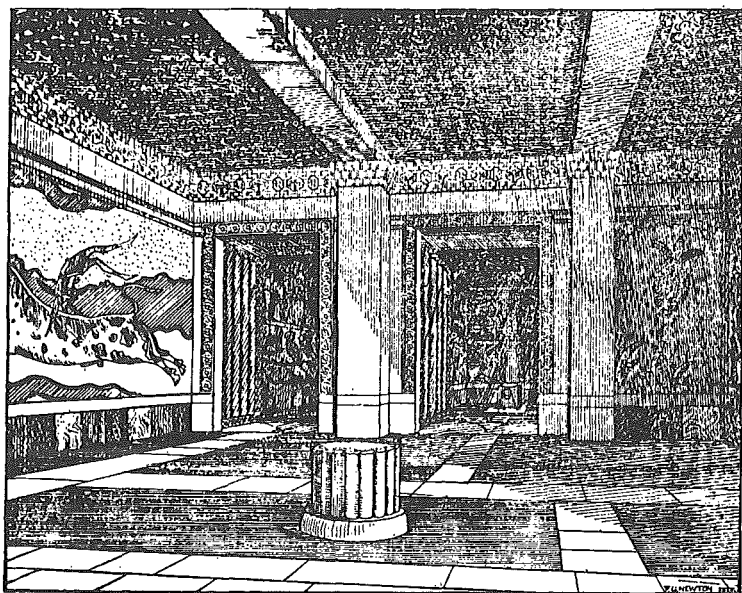


Fig. 11. — Palace of Knossos. The West Porch. (After A. Evans).

there followed the most brilliant age of Minoan Crete. The ruined buildings were levelled, and in the case of Phaestos, partly covered with a mixture of lime and crushed potsherds. The palaces still standing belong, in their main lines, to this period.

Features of the new palaces are their majestic propylaea; colonnades; staircases connecting the several storeys;

light wells serving dark inner rooms and multiple doorways, in which one or more walls are replaced by a row of doors, which could be opened or closed, according to the time of year, so as to obtain the desired temperature. Gypsum, a sort

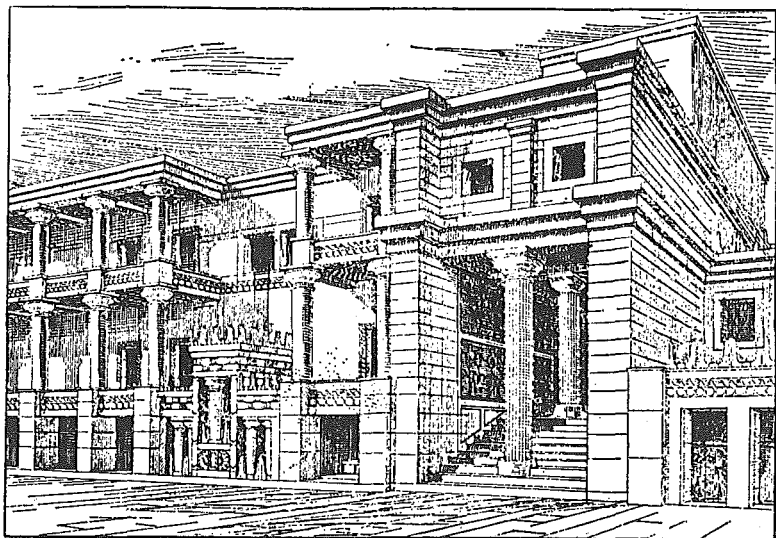


Fig. 12. — Palace of Knossos. Façade of the West Wing seen from the Central Court. (After A. Evans).

of Cretan alabaster, (*calcium sulphate*), quarried locally at Knossos and Phaestos, was used in the form of slabs for facing walls and covering large areas of floor, and for the bases of the wooden doorjambs. The column bases, made either of the same material or of *poros* limestone, are low, in contrast to the high bases in variegated stone of the earlier period. The benches, a feature of the new palaces, and the steps of the stairs, were also made of gypsum. Green schist was also used for paving the floors, the joints between the slabs being filled with red plaster instead of the rough limestone slabs of the preceding stage. The external façades were faced with masonry in limestone, and so were the light-wells. The roofs, always flat, were constructed with rafters

and crossbeams. The columns were made of reversed tree-trunks, set tapering end downwards, and the shaft was usu-

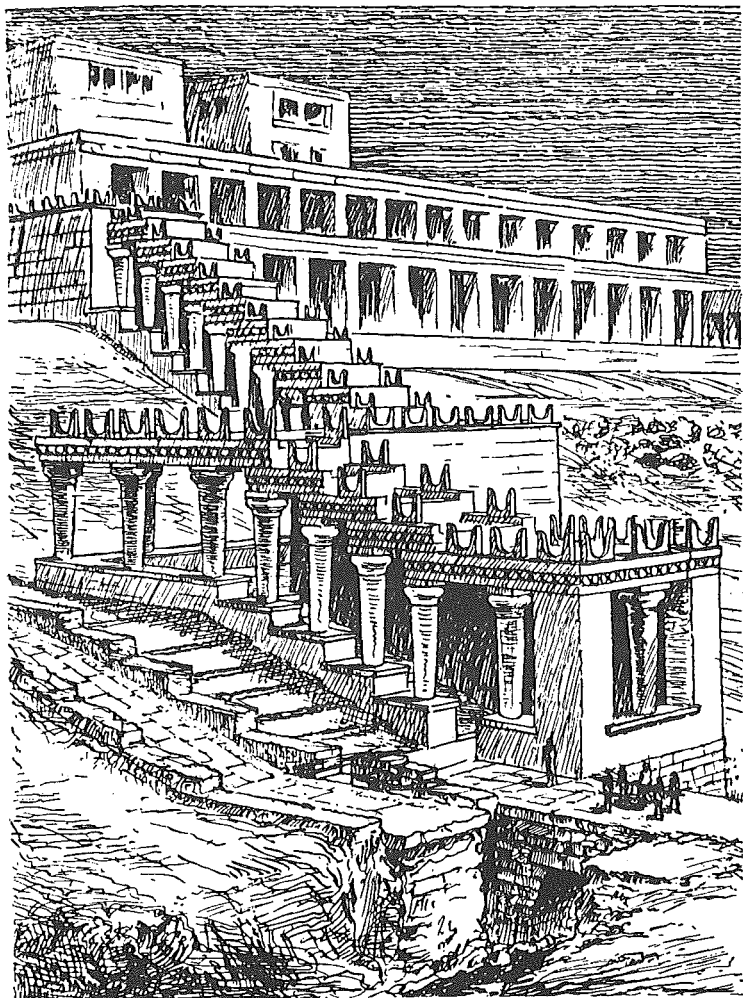


Fig. 13. — Palace of Knossos. The Stepped Portico and the South Façade
(After A. Evans).

ally not fluted. The capital, forerunner of the Mycenaean and Doric capital, was of wood, too. A framework of vertical

and horizontal beams was usually built into the walls as a precaution against earthquake. Fixed hearths, like those in the Mycenaean megara of the Peloponnese, are not found. Compared with the other two palaces, that of Mallia, with its walls built of large sun-dried mud bricks, and the lack of gypsum slabs, seems less luxurious and impressive.

Apart from the three palaces there appeared at this time a series of smaller, but still splendid, buildings which could be interpreted as the villas of powerful land-owners. It has been suggested that the appearance of these mansions, varying in size and richness, points to a decline in the power of the central authority. Various particulars make it probable that these were residences of great functionaries or priests, who were in the process of attaining greater independence. For instance at Knossos, a little after 1600 B. C., the South House was built, encroaching on a section previously occupied by the east wall of the Great Stepped Portico leading to the Palace, which had been destroyed by an earthquake. The Little Palace, The House of the High Priest, The House of the Chancel Screen, The South-East House, the so-called Royal Villa, with their marked sacred features, are no doubt residences of prominent members of the Minoan nobility, and, with even greater likelihood, of the priesthood.

The villa of Aghia Triadha, near Phaestos, is believed to be the summer dwelling of the rulers of Phaestos or, and this is more probable, the seat of the governor of the western part of the Mesara plain. A rural villa of Neo-palatial date was discovered near Gortyn, east of Phaestos. At Tylissos three large buildings have been found, grouped close together. East of Herakleion, at Amnisos, near the mouth of the river of the same name, now called Karteros and further east again, at the site of Nirou, are found similar edifices. There stood two storeys high at least, and have staircases, multiple doors, lightwells and «lustral areas». Frequently they

also have painted decorations.

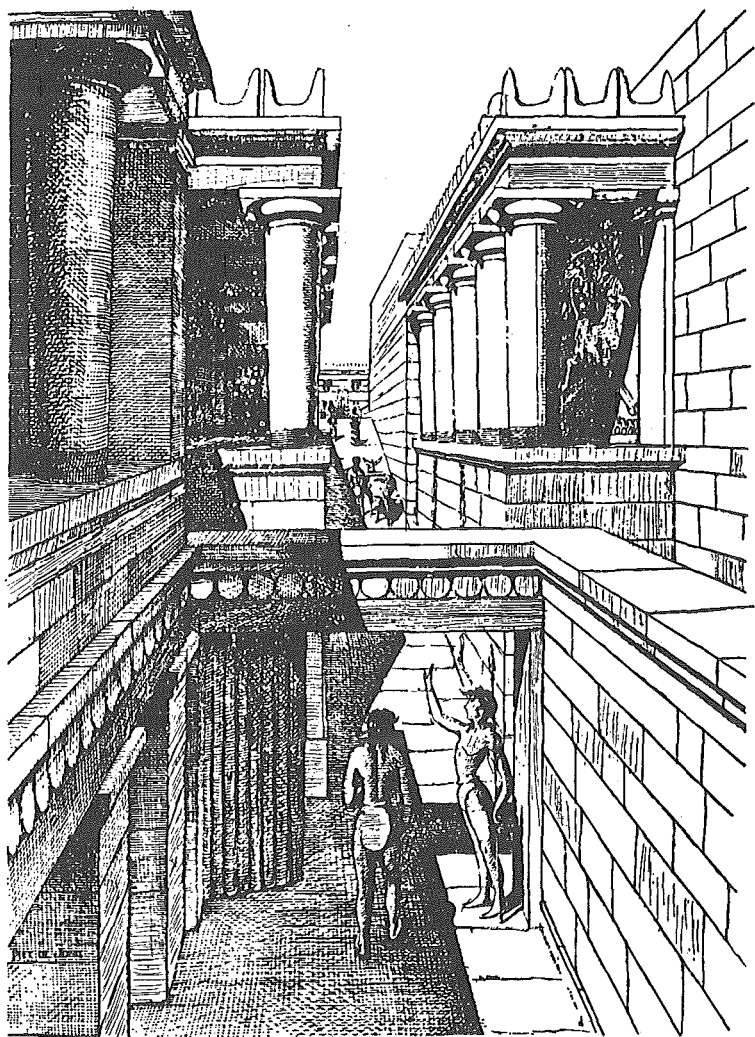


Fig. 14. — Palace of Knossos. Passage of the Northern Entrance.

The important mansions near Vathypetro and at Archanes excavated by Marinatos and Sakellarakis surely belonged to powerful land-owners. The same must be true of

those at Sklavokampos, Apodoulou, and the villas in the Sitea region.

The villas, like the palaces, have magazines containing rows of pithoi for the storage of cereals and pulses. Small quantities of these, carbonized and crushed under the ruins, have turned up in the excavations. Olive oil and wine, too, have been stored in the jars. Clay vats for treading the grapes, with an outlet for the must, and a receptacle into which it flowed, have been found at Vathypetro and elsewhere. The economic basis of these establishments, consequently, must have been fundamentally agricultural.

We cannot be certain whether the owners of the little palaces or villas were officials serving the central authority, and tending to assert their independence, as happened in Egypt from time to time, or whether we are dealing with local land-owners who were vassals of the ruler. In any case, there is no indications of serious disputes having arisen between the two parties. The settlements continued to be unfortified, and the Pax Minoica still reigned in the island, even if certain traditions preserved by ancient Greek authors relating to strife between Minos and his supposed brothers Sarpedon and Rhadamanthus ultimately banished from Crete, suggest that the peace was not unbroken or complete.

Palaces and little palaces do not exhaust our knowledge of life in Neo-palatial times. The large palaces, and some at least of the smaller ones, were surrounded by regular towns and villages. At Knossos, flat-roofed houses, large and small, among which wind narrow cobbled lanes, covered the slopes of the low hill on which stood the many storied pile of the palace, and extend to the higher hills of Gypsadhes and Prophitis Elias. Roads and a bridge over the river Kairatos connected the town to the interior of the island, while other roads led to the main harbour of Knossos, the present day Poros and Katsamba, on the estuary of the Kairatos. A rich, populous sea-port flourished here, and from

its sandy beaches the Minoan navies set sail for the Aegean, the Orient, and Egypt. The population, of Knossos together with that of the harbour - town itself, must have amounted to several thousands. Other ports belonging to

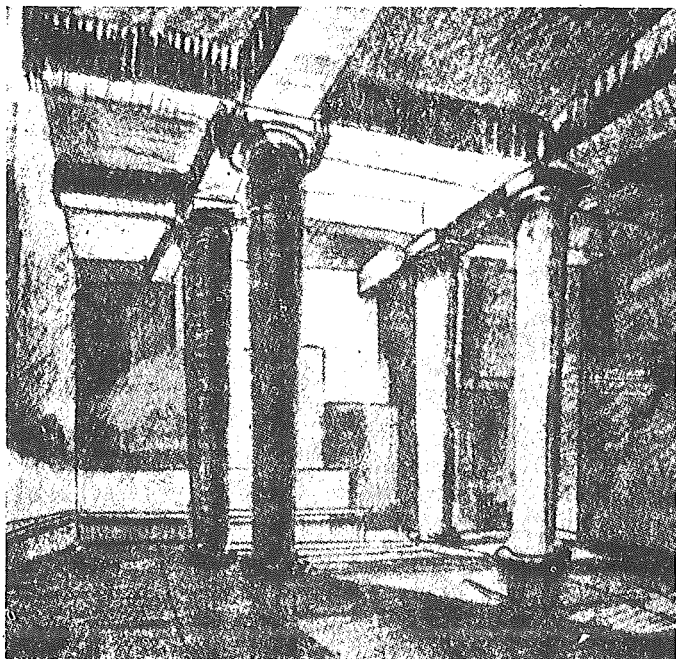


Fig. 15. — Palace of Phaistos the «Queen's Megaron». (After Pernier)

this region were Amnisos, already mentioned, and Aghii Theodhori.

Similar towns and settlements lie round the palace of Phaistos and the villa of Aghia Triada. The ports in this area, Matala and Kommos, are situated on the extreme western edge of the Mesara plain, looking out over the Libyan Sea.

We know more about the Minoan towns of East Crete, such as Gournia, with its narrow alleys and small houses inhabited by cultivators, fishermen, sailors and artisans. The town was built on a hillside; on the crown of the hill rose

a small palace, seat of the local governor. Large and richly appointed buildings are known from another settle-

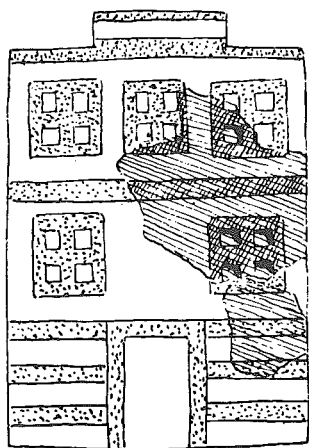


Fig. 16. — Model of a house from Knossos.

ment, on the little islet of Pseira, now deserted. It has been suggested that these houses belonged to wealthy private individuals and that the island was a dependency of Gournia. But its importance as a trading-post and control-point for shipping in the gulf of Mirabello, beside the presence of painted reliefs like those found at Knossos, probably indicate that Pseira was the seat of an official directly answerable to the central government. Large, sumptuous houses are again found on the east coast of Crete, at Palaikastro. On the

south coast, near Myrtos, on the Pyrgos Hill, a Minoan village was recently discovered by G. Cadogan; the beautiful house of the local prince is in the middle of the village, on the summit of the hill.

But the most important site of east Crete is unquestionably the palace of Kato Zakros, situated roughly at the mid-point of the east coast, and lately discovered by N. Platon. Its position is ideally suited for navigation to Syria, Cyprus and Egypt with a view to trade and the importing of raw materials. The discovery of copper ingots from Cyprus and tusks of Syrian elephants substantiate these eastern connexions. Tablets with inscriptions turned up here, but the chief glory of the site lies in the unique collection of intact stone vessels of a ritual character. The Cretan envoys, or *Kephti*, as the Cretans were called by the ancient Egyptians, probably set off from here, taking with them libation vases of superlative workmanship, like the

Zakros finds, as presents for the Pharaoh. These envoys are known to us from the wall-paintings in the tombs of the Egyptian «viziers» of Queen Hatshepsut and of Tuthmosis III, built between the years 1520 and 1450 B. C. Diplomatic relations, comprising exchange of gifts between the two courts, were apparently customary during this epoch.

MINOAN COLONIES

Minoan colonies or trading stations of Neo-palatial date apparently existed at various places in the Aegean, such as Kythera, Melos, Kea, Thera, Skopelos, Rhodes, Carpathos, Miletos among others, and probably also in Syria. Echoes of this spread of Minoan influence survive in Greek traditions mentioning several cities bearing the name *Minoa*. There was a Minoa on an islet near Megara, others in Siphnos, Amorgos, Paros, at Monemvasia in Laconia, in Corfu, and also in Sicily. «Minoan nymphs» are mentioned at Delos. In Crete, too, there were Minoas at places of vital importance to sea-faring, such as the Gulf of Mirabello and Soudha Bay. Evans supposed that there were Minoan settlements and Cretan rulers in the Peloponnese, with whom he connected the tholos tombs, and the splendid finds, obviously of Minoan workmanship, from Mycenae. Nowadays, the claim that there was a Minoan colonization of the Peloponnese is considered exaggerated, and scholars tend to diminish the importance of «Minoan thalassocracy» during the Neo-palatial period. At all events, the extent to which Minoan culture was transmitted to the outside world during this period is unquestioned, and so is the strength of its influence in the Peloponnese. This influence may have been exerted through mutual relations, alternately friendly and hostile, through trade and inter-marriage between the Cretan court and the local Achaean princely families, rather than by conquest. In the Greek legends, traces of these events are preserved, and of the civiliz-

ing activity of the Minoans.

BURIALS

At the beginning of our period, the dead were buried in pithoi or oval larnakēs, within rock-cut chamber tombs. These burials are well known to us from tombs in the neighbourhood of Knossos, where they continue those of the previous period. The tholos tomb south of Knossos constructed during the preceding phase, continued in use during the Neo-palatial period, like the tomb at Kamilari. The bias toward the monumental, typical of the time, can also be seen in the funerary architecture. During the years immediately following 1600 B. C. a royal tomb was built south of Knossos with a rock-cut burial chamber. In front of it stands a two-storied building, containing a crypt with square piers, a portal, courtyard and portico. The structure of this «Temple Tomb» clearly implies that it was also a shrine, both for the cult of the dead and the worship of the deity, like that of Minos in Sicily, who according to Diodorus, was murdered there while on a campaign.

FRESCOES

This period may be considered the peak of Minoan civilization, and the growth of populous and prosperous cities coincided with a fresh flowering of Minoan art. The palaces were decorated not only with painted plaster, but also with wall-paintings, both purely decorative and pictorial. Resistant pigments of mineral origin, or derived from metallic oxides, yielding clear pure reds and yellows, white, black, blue and green colours, were used. That true fresco technique was employed cannot be considered proved, although one type of preparation, in which guide lines were impressed on the surface by means of a fine cord, could only be used in fresh plaster.

The motifs of the decorative or abstract frescoes, include maeanders, sometimes called «maze» or «labyrinth» patterns; diagonals; bands of rosettes and spirals; and, sometimes, decorating the ceilings, linked spirals in low relief.



Fig. 17. — Miniature fresco from Knossos.

The greater number of the figured frescoes belong to the years following 1600 B. C., according to Evans. Minoan art did not favour the stone statue or stone carving; it preferred to mould shapes in a mixture of lime and sand, which was then applied to the plaster coating of the wall, after which the relief was painted. The magnificent bull from the North Entrance of Knossos was carried out in this technique; so were the representations of bull-fights from the East wing; the Priest-King (better known as the «Prince with the Lily Crown»); the «Ladies», or goddesses, from Pseira in East Crete. The «Ladies in Blue» from Knossos, similar in style though painted in the flat, not in relief, are reckoned to be somewhat earlier.

At this time, after 1600 B. C., «miniature» frescoes, in which human figures appear on an extremely small scale, became fashionable at Knossos. They formed a zone of decoration on the plastered wall, above the dado. The subjects of these miniature frescoes are religious festivities. Men and

women have gathered round a «tripartite shrine», crowned with sacral horns; richly dressed ladies or priestesses sit on either side of the shrine. Another fresco in the same style shows a grove of sacred olive trees, within which a ritual dance is taking place. Here, too, the ceremony is being watched by seated priestesses, surrounded by a crowd of both sexes. The men raise their arms and wave their hands enthusiastically. Probably the mass of worshippers in both frescoes are awaiting a great event : the epiphany of the Deity, personified by the Queen.

A little later, between 1600 and 1500 B. C., scenes from nature became common. Interesting frescoes of this date are to be found in the House of the Frescoes and the Caravanserai at Knossos. Small birds, partridges and monkeys roam through a landscape of veined rocks, scattered with lilies, irises, crocuses, wild roses and ivy. An officer and his black troops are pictured in the House of Frescoes, and there are illustrations of chariots from the palace. A monkey is represented in the fresco of the «Saffron Gatherer», as has since been shown, not a human being, as supposed by Evans. The fresco from the «Queen's Megaron» is approximately contemporary; in it dolphins and fish, large and small, are seen swimming among rocks, seaweed and sea - urchins.

Human beings were now rendered on a larger scale than that of the miniature frescoes. In the «Bull Sports» from the East Wing of the palace at Knossos, men and women grasp the horns of the bull and somersault over his back. Successive instantaneous stages of the feat are captured and presented in a conception of great daring. A young dancing girl is portrayed in the Queen's Megaron.

From a still later period, between the years 1500 and 1450 B. C., we have a fresco from a shrine in the North-West wing of the palace at Knossos in which worshippers offer libations to a seated male figure, who may be the Young God. The magnificent large scale fresco of the Procession,

with its countless gift bearers, must have been painted at about the same time. It shows young men carrying rhytons and other precious vases in some ceremony in honour of a queen or goddess.

The little palaces and villas are also often decorated with frescoes, as we have already said. At Amnisos there are frescoes of white and red lilies; at Aghia Triadha a goddess is shown seated near a shrine; in a landscape scene birds, cats, and wild goats wander among wild vegetation. A unique stone sarcophagus is covered with frescoes illustrating the cult of the dead. At Tyliossos the decoration, executed in miniature, shows athletic contests. There are fragments of frescoes from another villa near Prasa east of Heraclion.

PLASTIC ART

Plastic art, in particular, flourished at this time. As in earlier periods, Cretan sculptors tend to shape small figurines of faience, ivory and bronze, less often of stone. Clay figurines too exist; an interesting group showing men and women with elaborately dressed hair, in attitudes of worship, was found at Piskokephalo. Bronze figurines of votaries are known from Tyliossos, Aghia Triadha and the Psykhro Cave. Small models of animals, mostly of oxen, more seldom of wild goats and horses, were discovered at the last two sites.

The technique of producing faience and glass paste, known from the Pre-palatial period, was now brought to perfection. Sand and clay mixed with some resinous substance acting as a binder were compressed in a mould; the colour was produced by adding a mixture of metallic oxide and alkali. The resulting glazed surface varied in hue from sea-blue to green. The famous snake Goddesses from the palace of Knossos were made by this method; in these, the tendency of the Minoan artist of this time towards closer study and a

more accurate rendering of nature can be clearly discerned. No longer, as during preceding periods, is the human figure distorted or subjected to stylization or abstraction; which does not mean, however, that this phase of Minoan art was completely naturalistic, as has sometimes been claimed. Rather there existed, as in all classical periods, an equilibrium between the natural data as perceived and the form imposed by the conception of the artist. This factor of intention was responsible for some postures and movements; the convention adopted for the eye, always portrayed as if in full face in the frescoes; and the colour code used to indicate sex. Emphasis on details is avoided in plastic art; the surface planes melt into each other, creating an impression of youthful delicacy and suppleness.

The Snake Goddesses also give us an idea of the rich, skilfully worked feminine dress fashionable in the Minoan court round 1600 B. C. : a skirt with flounces, an apron and an open bodice leaving the breasts bare. Contemporary masculine dress is embellished by an embroidered kilt. Occasionally, male figures such as priests and musicians are seen wearing long feminine robes.

Like the Snake Goddesses, two faience plaques showing, respectively, a cow and a wild goat suckling their young, probably aspects of the Mother Goddess, were found in the Temple Repositories of the palace at Knossos.

The «Acrobat» from Knossos, an ivory statuette showing a boy executing a somersault over a bull, is one of the masterpieces of the time. As the earliest representation of a human figure moving through space — still more, actually in mid-air — it constitutes a considerable artistic achievement.

Other ivory objects also exist, such as the pyxis with carvings of bull fight from Katsamba and the figurines of children from Palaikastro. Outside Greece, in the museums of Boston and Toronto, there are two ivory figurines with details in gold, the first a Snake Goddess, the second a female athlete

or a goddess in the garb of a bull-leaper. However, since these objects were not discovered in excavations, their authenticity must remain in doubt.

The Neo-palatial stone libation vases or rhytons are outstanding. Some are shaped like the head of a sacred animal: for instance, the famous steatite bull's head from the Little Palace at Knossos, with eyes inlaid with rock crystal and a mother-of-pearl muzzle. A similar but smaller rhyton has been found at Zakros. Another comparable object is the head of a lioness in alabaster from the palace of Knossos. There are also clay rhytons in the shape of a bull's head, or even of the whole animal.

Three stone vases, of which two are rhytons, with relief carving, came from the small palace of Aghia Triadha. One of these, (the Athletes' Vase), a conical rhyton, is carved with representations of bull games and boxing. Figures in daring movement, some of them upside down with feet in the air, demonstrate the bias of Minoan art for the instantaneous, in contrast to the static, immobile character of Oriental art. The second rhyton from Aghia Triadha, shaped like an ostrich egg, is the famous «Harvesters' Vase»; it shows a procession in honour of the fruits of the earth and of nature. Marching men, carrying implements which appear to combine flail and sickle, follow a priest or prince, dressed in a scaly jerkin and holding a long staff. A group of musicians sing to the accompaniment of an instrument like the Egyptian sistrum of Isis. One member of the party stumbles, while his companion suddenly turns to look at him. The third vase, a cup or goblet, shows an officer bearing a sword and presenting the skins of large animals, probably the hides of sacrificed bulls, to a young king or prince who stands, holding a sceptre, in front of some building.

Another wonderful carved stone rhyton was found in the palace of Zakros. It shows a «tripartite shrine» built among rocky mountains, altars stand before it, wild goats lie down

on the roof or gallop round the building; wild birds fly above the sacred horns or perch on them. The vase was covered with gold leaf, giving the impression that it was of solid gold; it seems that many, if not all, of the carved stone vessels had a similar gold coating.

Other stone rhytons are in the shape of a triton shell, and there is also a series of various stone vessels from Knossos and Zakros, imitating pottery shapes : amphoras, jugs, basins, cups, small pithoi etc. Stone offering tables and lamps, with or without pedestals, and having two or more sockets for the wick, are also common. The lamps are often carved with a relief of spirals or leaves. The vases are usually made of serpentine, Egyptian alabaster, porphyry and conglomerate. More rarely, use was made of obsidian, and rock crystal; there is a unique example in the last mineral from Zakros, with additional decoration in gold wire. Other vases were carved with ritual scenes, octopuses etc.

POTTERY

Pottery, too, reaches new heights during the era of the new palaces, and the rapidity of its development reflects a tendency characteristic of Minoan art in general. Once realized, forms are swiftly abandoned and new aims pursued, without, however, interrupting or reversing the main course of culture. At the beginning of the period, the decorative styles typical of the early palaces survived, but without their former creative vitality. The famous Kamares style had disappeared but the light-on-dark technique was still dominant, with decoration in white and red on a dark background. The usual motifs : spirals in white paint, bands, and dotting, were sometimes combined with relief decoration. The vase shapes became more slender and elongated, distinctly tapering towards the base. The pithoi were decorated with wavy rope patterns and round medallions in plastic or impressed technique. Side by side with pottery shapes carried over from the past, appeared new ones, the most characteristic

being the stirrup-jar or false necked amphora, with one genuine opening, and a second sham spout with two small handles.

Gradually the use of white paint in decoration was restricted to subsidiary motifs, such as lines and dots, until it eventually died out, to be replaced by the convers «dark-on-light» technique, with dark designs on a light yellow background. The colour of the paint varies from brown to dark red, depending upon the firing temperature. Motifs such as spirals, rows of leaves, stripes, and so on,



Fig. 18. — The Lily Vases from Knossos.

continued to be used, but in minor roles, and confined to unimportant parts of the vase, like the neck, shoulders and handles. Representational designs, drawn from plant and sea life, take first place. So the new styles, the Floral style, and a little later, after 1500 B. C., the Marine style, developed from the abstract decoration of the preceding period. Among the earliest examples of the first style, (about 1600 B. C.) are certain vases from the palace of Knossos, decorated with white lilies and recalling the lily fresco from Amnisos. A design commonly employed consists of slender branches bordered with leaves; later as a result of Egyptian influence, the papyrus flower became popular. Typical vases in this style have been found at Tylissos, Nirou and Vathypetro. Among the most beautiful examples of Floral style decora-

tion, apart from the lily vases already referred to, is an exquisite jug from Phaestos entirely covered with fine leafy sprays. Vases in the Marine style rhytons, bridge-spouted jugs, three handled amphoras, are painted with octopuses, argonauts, triton shells, starfish, rocks and seaweed. On a stirrup vase from Gournia there is a wonderful representation of an octopus embracing the body of the pot with its tentacles; even the suckers have not been forgotten. The suppleness of these creatures fitted them for the decoration of convex surfaces, in keeping with the aesthetic principles of Minoan artists, whereas the more rigid shapes of higher animals were avoided. Human beings appear only carved on stone and ivory objects. There does, however, exist a group of vases with motifs such as the bull's head, the double axe, the sacral knot, having a religious significance.

METALLURGY

Like the other arts and crafts, metallurgy reaches its apogee during Neo-Palatial times. Large hemispherical bronze cauldrons, made of sections riveted together, were found in Tylissos. Groups of various bronze vessels, often with repoussé decoration, including ewers, tripod cauldrons, basins, jugs and amphoras came from Knossos, particularly from the North-West and South Houses and the tombs of Mallia, and from East Crete. The South House at Knossos also provided a collection of silver vases, and a one-handed cup in gold was discovered in a tomb at Aghios Ioannis. The bronze implements, too, show great variety. Double axes, both as everyday tools and as votive offerings are represented from the Nirou mansion and the Arkalokhori Cave, and there are single axes, adzes, hammers, knives, hooks and saws, some of which, presumably for timber felling, are very large. This period marks the first appearance of swords; some specimens, such as those discovered in the Arkalokhori cave, can measure over a yard in length

excluding the hilt. In the horned sword, a type characteristic of the period, the shoulders are drawn out into projections guarding the hilt. Two magnificent swords, were found at the palace of Mallia. One has a pommel of rock crystal; the bare pommel of the second was covered with a gold roundel with repoussé ornament. This shows an acrobat performing a dangerous back somersault; perhaps in real life, this took place over the same sword set in the ground, point upwards. Various pieces of jewelry in gold exist; earrings in the shape of bull's heads, beads for necklaces, signet rings, sometimes engraved with religious scenes, charming little animal figurines and amulets.

SEALS

Seal-carving flourished greatly during this period. Amygdaloid and lentoid shapes are most common, in hard semi-precious stones such as carnelian, onyx, sardonyx, agate, jasper, haematite, rock crystal, amethyst, and chalcedony. The subjects are taken from nature; cuttle-fish, fish, birds, branches, bulls, lions devouring bulls, and wild goats are represented. Frequently an antithetic arrangement is adopted. Some seals show religious subjects, such as the celebration of rites, bull games, and sacred buildings, or objects, like libation vases. A parallel group exists depicting various demonic beings, like the Egyptian genius *Ta-urt*, griffins, sphinxes, and the man-bull or Minotaur and a series showing creatures of nightmarish fantasy, especially frequent among the seals from Zakros. There are clay impressions of similar sealstones from Aghia Triadha, Knossos, Sklavokampos and Gournia. On some of these appear the earliest renderings of the swift two-wheeled war chariot, drawn by horses. This new engine of war, together with the horse itself, was probably brought from Egypt, where it had been introduced by the Asiatic Hyksos kings. In these images, the capacity of the Minoan artist for

synthesis, already unfolding in the previous period, reaches perfection. The individual elements of each representation are not placed side by side, as in the Orient but are combined in a single whole, and on the basis of aesthetic principles independent of the actual content of the subject. The tendency towards synthesis, and the dynamic character of Minoan art, which have already been stressed, constitute fundamental traits of the whole civilization.

THE CATASTROPHE OF 1450

This summit of culture, attained during the first half of the 15th. century B. C., was suddenly overwhelmed at about 1450 B. C. by a fresh catastrophe. The centres of Minoan civilization, Phaestos, Aghia Triadha, Mallia, the mansions of Tyliossos, Vathypetro, Nirou and Ammisos, the cities of East Crete at Gournia, Pseira, Palaikastro, and Zakros were all reduced to ruins. The city of Knossos, too, suffered from the disaster, which was accompanied in most cases by great conflagrations. In all likelihood this catastrophe was caused by the terrible eruption of the volcano of Thera, resulting in a series of devastating earthquakes and a mighty tidal wave which swept the north coast of Crete, shattering the Minoan fleet. We owe this theory to Professor Spyridon Marinatos. It is plausible in deed to link the destruction in Crete with an eruption on Thera since comparable activity of the volcano, accompanied by earthquakes and tidal waves in Crete, occurred, on a small scale, during the Cretan War at 1650 A. D., and has been repeated in modern times, 1956. The legend of Atlantis has been interpreted as an echo of the cataclysm.

For a long time past, many have believed that all the Minoan centres were in the end destroyed simultaneously, and that this final destruction, including that of the palace of Knossos, took place rather later, at about

1400 B. C. The difficulty in accepting this view lies in the fact that, as we shall see, the destruction level created by the final disaster at Knossos contained pottery of the advanced Palace style, while in the destruction level of the other sites, earlier, white painted pottery, typical of the beginning of the Late Minoan phase was found, as well as pottery in the Floral and Marine styles. This divergence has been explained by many scholars as a local and not a chronological difference of style. It has been suggested that the Palace style flourished at Knossos, while an older ceramic tradition survived in the rest of Crete. But recent excavations by Hood in Minoan houses at Knossos have proved that here, too, a destruction took place, contemporary with that suffered by other centres in the Late Minoan IB phase (1450 B. C.). The finds from this destruction level at Knossos are comparable in all respects with the corresponding finds from the other sites. Consequently, there is no longer any valid reason for lowering the date of this destruction to ca. 1400 B. C.

After this catastrophe the other Minoan centres seem to have been deserted for a time, while Knossos entered upon a new phase. This is understandable if we accept that the natural disaster was followed by an invasion of Achaeans from the Peloponnese, who settled at Knossos. According to Hood, the destruction was due to this conquest and not by natural causes, while others suggest that the establishment of the Achaeans at Knossos, and the Hellenization of the dynasty ruling there came about peacefully, perhaps through marriage between royal houses. At all events it seems certain that immediately, or a short while after the catastrophe, a political change took place in Crete, and this explains why the Cretans did not rebuild their ruined settlements. Once installed in the capital, the foreign conqueror probably made sure that the other towns were not rebuilt. Those of the population who had not saved themselves by flight, surely suffered severely, not only

from long continued slaughter, but from captivity and removal abroad. Distant places, hard to control, such as Zakros were not immediately necessary to the Mycenaeans who possessed their own routes of communication with the East.

THE PERIOD OF THE PALACE STYLE

There can be no doubt that at this time, and especially after 1450 B. C., considerable changes are evident at Knossos,

which Evans already considered as proof of a change of dynasty. The most striking innovation is the invention of a new writing through modification of the Linear A script. The new script, Linear B, was used for keeping records of palace property, and the language of these texts is Mycenaean Greek, the first form of the Greek language known to us. The palace of Knossos



Fig. 19. — Palace style amphora from the Harbour Town of Knossos.

has produced about three thousand clay tablets inscribed with Linear B characters.

At Knossos in the same period a new pottery style was created, or introduced. Although this developed out of the Minoan Neo-palatial styles, it is found almost nowhere else

in Crete. On the other hand, it does appear in the Peloponnese. Some investigators have considered this as proof that the new style is inspired by non-Minoan, Achaean traditions; in it they discern, perhaps fancifully, the limpid and rational approach, the love of symmetry characteristic of the Greek spirit.

In the new Palace style under discussion the typical shapes include the three-handled amphora with a broad everted rim, the squat alabastron, and the goblet. The designs are drawn from schematic papyrus flowers



Fig. 20. — Palace style goblet from the Harbour Town of Knossos.

with or without volutes; lilies; ivy leaves; octopuses tending toward stylization, their tentacles, which have lost their suckers, coiled in symmetrical spirals on either side of the body; argonauts and more rarely, fish. The minor marine motifs such as seaweed are avoided. The decoration is not disposed in zones, but usually forms a unity covering the whole vase, either encircling it, or emphasizing certain aspects. Thus, for example, the spaces lying between the handles of the amphoras can be filled with an argonaut, or a papyrus flower linked to a rosette. The three-handled Palace amphoras and pithoi discovered near the west façade of the palace of Knossos, and in some houses near by, are splendid examples of such decoration. Apart from the motifs already described, there are double axes, and papyrus plants in low relief. On other contemporary vases appear helmets and figure-of-eight shields, while birds are used for the first time in pottery decoration, perhaps as a result of influ-

ence from the frescoes.

In general, the impression is of an anti-naturalistic approach and a return to the spirit of pure decoration, yet



Fig. 21. — Palace style jug from the Harbour Town of Knossos.

in a way quite different from that of the Kamares style. The polyps and the flowers, sometimes intentionally superimposed or inverted, tend to lose the pulsating life and movement of the preceding phase, and become transmuted into abstract motifs.

The bird designs on the vases are

built up by a synthesis of traits derived from separate creatures; partridge, pheasant and waterfowl. These qualities, of course, are determined by internal development, not by influence from the Achaean racial element. Had this never existed, the art of Crete, with its free-ranging secular character, would still have sought new forms of expression, as during earlier stages. After the surfeit of realism, a return to abstraction was inevitable, since, as Christian Zervos has perceptively observed, all free art oscillates between these two poles.

The same anti-naturalistic tendencies can be discerned in the contemporary frescoes. In the Throne Room, thought to have been built at this date, the griffins, guardians of the Deity, are painted on either side of the throne—whether of a king or a queen, we do not know. Plant motifs de-

rived from papyrus, spirals and rosettes are woven into the griffins' manes. On another fresco, a marine subject, the argonaut, is associated not with sea weed but with reeds, while

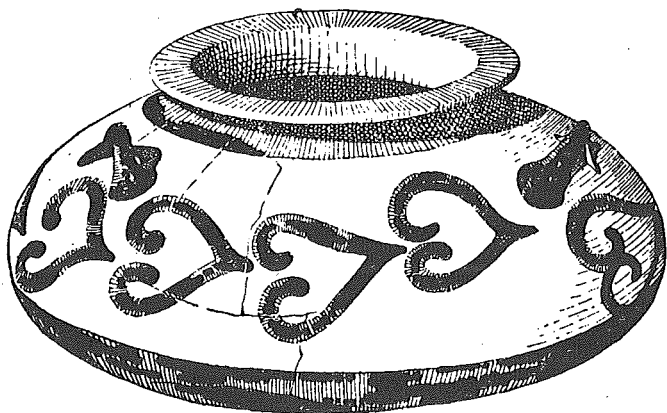


Fig. 22. — Palace style «alabastron» from the Harbour Town.

its tentacles have acquired a curious lacy border. To the same period belongs the fresco of the large figure of eight shields from the upper Hall of the Colonnades, and the bull game fragments from the West Porch, the anteroom to the Throne Room, and the Upper King's Megaron. The use of painted decoration imitating a dado of gypsum slabs is characteristic of this era.

Most of the tombs at Isopata, and some at Zapher Papoura, near Knossos; the tombs near Sanatorion and Aghios Ioannis; those of the Harbour Town near the mouth of the Kairatos, at Katsamba, among others, can be attributed to much the same date. The royal tomb at Isopata, with its rectangular burial chamber, was perhaps built a little earlier, but it was still in use. Chamber tombs containing wooden coffins or larnakes, sometimes painted blue or white, are common, and graves, with a burial pit at the bottom of a shaft from which it is divided by a ceiling of stone slabs, or in a cavity-like side chamber, are also found.

Warrior graves, too, are common, the burials accompanied by swords, spears, javelins, small knives and arrows. A new type of sword with a cruciform hilt makes its appearance during this period. A bronze helmet with cheek pieces and a knob for a horse-hair plume or crest was found in a tomb at Sanatorion, and another, made of wild boar tusks, similar to the Mycenaean type described in the Iliad and found in mainland Greece, in a tomb at Zapher Pappoura, near Knossos. Thus the tombs and their contents help to create a picture of the war loving Achaeans who ruled Knossos from 1450 to about 1400 B. C.

THE FINAL CATASTROPHE OF THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS

A little after 1400 B. C., while the pottery pursued a development of the Palace style, marked by still more schematic designs, the final destruction of Knossos took place. This catastrophe was formerly attributed either to an earthquake, such as those responsible for previous disasters, or to foreign incursions by the Achaeans, rebelling against supposed Minoan rule in Greece. The legend of Theseus has been cited in support of the second theory, his killing of the Minotaur symbolizing the destruction of Minoan power by its former vassals. But the decipherment of the Knossian clay tablets demonstrated that the Greek language was already in use at Knossos, and that, consequently, an Achaean royal house was reigning in the palace when it was destroyed. This meant that the theory of an Achaean invasion was no longer tenable, unless we assume a conflict between the Achaeans of the mainland and the Minoanized Achaeans of Knossos. Still less likely is the theory that the final destruction of the palace of Knossos was caused by a rebellion of the Minoans against the Achaeans rulers established there. If we accept that the other palaces, the towns and smaller settlements, had been wiped out earlier, it is doubtful if a Minoan power capable of destroying

Knossos survived in Crete at 1400 B. C.

At any rate, according to prevailing opinions, no palace existed on the old site at Knossos after 1400 B. C. The opposite view is expressed nowadays only by Blegen, and even more especially by Palmer. According to their theory, after the destruction of 1400 B. C., itself caused by the arrival of the Achaeans, the palace continued in use as a seat of the Achaean kings and its final destruction must be dated about two hundred years later. This theory is based on the fact that the Linear B clay tablets found at Knossos are identical in character with those discovered at the Mycenaean palace of Pylos in the West Peloponnese, which was destroyed about 1200 B. C. The tablets from Pylos and Knossos are in fact similar in shape, and similar also in the written signs and the linguistic forms of the texts. These likenesses prove, in Palmer's opinion, that the Knossian clay tablets, like those of Pylos, belong to late Mycenaean times; and consequently that the palace of Knossos, since the tablets are associated with its last days, was destroyed about the end of the Mycenaean period as a result of the Dorian invasion.

In order to support this view, Palmer had recourse to the excavation journal kept by Evans's colleague, Mackenzie, and to Evans's own notebooks. In these, and in Evans's first published accounts of the Knossos excavation, but also in the final authoritative publication, Palmer found evidence of the discovery of groups of Linear B tablets in strata belonging to the Mycenaean period. He also noticed that Evans himself at first attributed certain groups of tablets to Mycenaean times and that, according to the journal, LM III vases were found at various spots on the floors of the palace. On this basis Palmer sought to show that the palace was destroyed in the twelfth century. This theory, which impugned Evans's authority and even his good faith, aroused violent controversy. Nevertheless, it is in fact difficult to accept such stagnation in the script and

in the language for such a long time, in the continuously developing Creto - Mycenaean culture. By lowering the date for the end of Knossos and at the same time raising that for the destruction of Pylos, thus decreasing the chronological gap between the two groups of tablets, the similarity between them might be perhaps easier to explain.

CHAPTER 4.

THE POST-PALATIAL OR MYCENAEAN PERIOD

THE ACHAEAN COLONIZATION

The destruction of the palace of Knossos caused no break in civilization. But, in fact, after 1400 B. C., its radiance grew dimmer, and the focus of Creto - Mycenaean culture was no longer to be found in the island, but in mainland Greece, especially the Peloponnese. There the fortified citadels of Mycenae and Tiryns, with their Cyclopean walls, gates and palaces, were erected; there, too, were built magnificent royal tholos tombs. Comparable palaces existed at Pylos, Thebes, Gla near Lake Kopais, and presumably at Calydon, Iolkos and Sparta. Settlements, fortified citadels and tombs have also been discovered at Midea and Asine in the Argolid, as well as elsewhere. The technique of fresco painting and ivory work, the carving of stone architectural ornaments, the inlaying of metal cups and daggers, all of which, under Cretan influence and example, had spread to the mainland during Neo - palatial times, still continued to be practised there. Such objects were now rarely to be found in Crete. Kings must have reigned in the island, and indeed this is indicated by the participation of Crete in the Trojan War with a considerable force of ships under the leadership of the King of Knossos, Idomeneus. But among the Achaean Kings, the King of Mycenae «rich in gold» was considered as supreme. The Minoan colonies in the Aegean were supplanted by Mycenaean ones; the Aegean pottery found in Egypt (at Amarna), Syria, and Sicily, came from mainland Greece instead of Crete. The Cretan artists worked more often abroad than at home, on the mainland and perhaps in Egypt: the decoration of the Amarna palaces seems influenced by the

Minoan frescoes showing subjects drawn from nature.

No palace of this date has yet been discovered at Knossos. Probably the seat of the Mycenaean overlord of Crete was transferred from the devastated palace to some side in the vicinity. The area of the old, ruined Minoan building was occupied by private individuals, who cleared and made temporary repairs to some parts of it, occasionally altering the original lay-out of the rooms by building new walls. It was the time of Re-occupation, as Evans termed it. The South Propylaeum was turned into a magazine for pithoi, and the apartments to the south were also inhabited. The same thing happened to the Northern Entrance Passage and west of it, to the Magazines, the «Custom House», and the area round the «School». A potter's kiln was set up south of the lightwell serving the Queen's Megaron. The small Shrine of the Double Axes belongs to this phase. In general, the character of the occupation is fairly poor; however, it may not have been as insignificant as Evans supposed. The same fate was suffered by the Little Palace; a shrine was built here within the remains of the older sanctuary.

No megaron of the Mycenaean type has yet been found at Knossos. But a large structure of this kind exists at Aghia Triadha, built during Post-palatial times, on the ruins of a Minoan villa. Contemporary with the megaron are the so-called «Agora» (a series of magazines, with a colonnade in front), parts of the local settlement and a shrine. Remains of a Mycenaean megaron have been identified by N. Platon at Tylissos.

The settlement at Khondros Viannos belongs to the years immediately following the destruction of Knossos. Carefully constructed houses dating to the earliest Post-palatial phase have been found at Palaikastro, Zakros and Gournia. A house at Poros, near Herakleion of the same period, with a small shrine and a bath, as well as pottery from the same region, show that the port of Knossos continued to exist, and even traded with Cyprus. But the towns

of Knossos and Phaestos were also fairly prosperous, as is shown by the rich cemeteries at Zapher Papoura and Kalyvia.

The Achaean colonization of Crete during the Post - palatial period is also borne out by the Mycenaean traditions preserved in Greek mythology. Thus, according to the tradition, Agamemnon founded several towns on the island, Pergamos, Lappa and Tegea. Achaeans took part in the founding of Polyrrheneia, and there is mention of colonists being dispatched from Mycenae and Messenia. The introduction of place names such as Gortyn, Arcadia and others to Crete is probably also connected with the Achaean influx. A mingling of the Greek Achaeans with the Pre - Hellenes or Eteo - Cretans, i. e. the «Genuine Cretans», perhaps with other additional racial elements, is responsible for the population of Crete during the Mycenaean period, multi - lingual as in Homer's description. Among the inhabitants of Crete at this time Homer mentions the Pelasgians, and the Kydonians, by some considered to be a Pre - Hellenic tribe, by others, with greater likelihood, as a Hellenic tribe established in Crete during the Mycenaean period.

In his list of the cities which took part in the Trojan War, Homer mentions, apart from Knossos, Gortyn, Lyktos, Miletos, Lykastos (perhaps located at the site of Vitsiles near Kanli Kastelli), Phaestos, and Rhytion (Rotasi). But no doubt the overseas enterprizes of the Cretan Achaeans were sometimes aimed at other quarters. About 1200 B. C. attacks on Egypt by «Peoples of the Sea» are recorded; the Egyptian texts in question mention the Pulesata, the Zakaru, and the Akaiwasha. The Pulesata are usually identified with the Philistines, who entered Palestine from *Kaphtor* in the Old Testament account, which most probably signifies Crete. The Zakaru may be connected with Zakros, which was settled afresh in Mycenaean times, and the Akaiwasha with the Achaeans.

As a result of Achaean colonization, and the consequent

increased communication with the Peloponnese, it seems that more favourable conditions were created for the development of West Crete, especially of the extreme west, where the modern city of Khania now stands. Some of the Achaean colonies mentioned earlier, such as Pergamos and Polyrrheneia, are found in this region. There, too, dwelt the Kydonians, near the banks of the Iardanos, the modern Platanianos or Keritis river. Settlements such as those near Kolymbari and Stylos, tombs, and other remains from the Mycenaean period are fairly plentiful in West Crete; Styrenius and Tzedakis have lately found Post - palatial buildings which have succeeded to an important Neo - palatial settlement on the Kastelli site in Khania.

T O M B S

At the beginning of the Post - palatial period graves with an oblique or vertical shaft continued in use at Zapher Papoura, the cemetery of Knossos. Built tombs also exist. A tomb with a square chamber roofed by a corbelled vault has been found at Damania, and another in Maleme, and circular vaulted tombs at Arkhanes, at Setea, at Apodhoulou and Stylos in West Crete. Rock - cut chamber tombs are widespread throughout this period. Those at Armeni, near Rethymno, recently excavated by Tzedakis, are of great interest.

The tombs often contain clay larnakes, which are of two types. The first is shaped like a modern bath, the second like a rectangular chest, raised on supporting feet, with a gable - shaped lid. These larnakes are rare in the Khania district. Sporadic instances of cremation, as at Mouliana and Photoula, near Setea, at Kritsa and Tylissos, occur towards the end of the Mycenaean period.

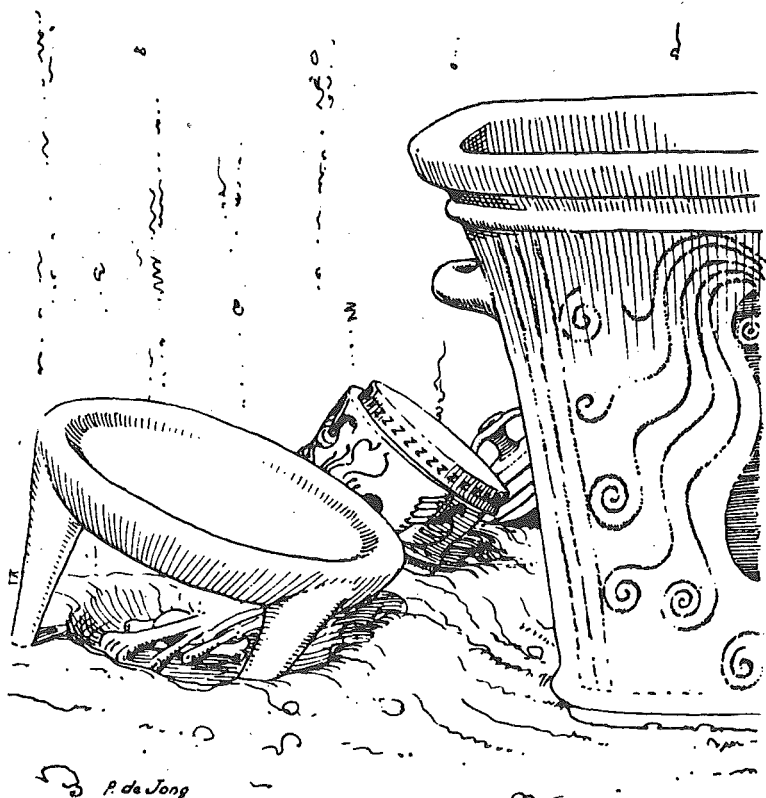


Fig. 23. — The interior of a chamber tomb at Pakhyammos, with a clay sarcophagus, a table of offering and a box containing the jewelry of the dead. His bones are collected in the little pit under the offerings table.

FRESCOS AND POTTERY

Few frescoes can be attributed with certainty to this era; one of these is the plaster floor painted with polyps and dolphins from the Mycenaean shrine at Aghia Triadha.

During its first phase (LM III A, 1400 - 1300 B. C.) the Post - palatial pottery continues the Palace style tradition. This phase is represented by a group of vases from the Temple Tomb at Knossos, by vases from Sellopoulo, Gypsadhes and

Kalyvia and by others from Kamilari, Palaikastro and Gournia. They include three - handled amphoras, stirrup jars, alabastra, round - mouthed jugs, flasks, pyxides, goblets, incense burners with a perforated lid, and craters. The decorative motifs of the preceding period become still more schematic. The octopus tentacles, sometimes reduced from eight to six, or even four, are excessively elongated, the papyrus flowers degenerate still further. Birds, usually long - billed waterfowl, whose first appearance dates to the Palace style phase, now become a common decorative subject, and so do fish. A technical hallmark in East Crete is the use of an all - over white slip as a background for decoration.

The movement towards pure decoration and the impoverishment of the designs continued and were intensified during the following phase (LM III B), in the thirteenth century. Technically the pottery is excellent, well fired, the red - brown colour lively and well burnished. This is the time of the «Mycenaean Koine», when pottery of remarkable uniformity spread to every corner touched of Mycenaean culture. At Knossos this phase is represented by stirrup jars and by the vases from the Shrine of the Double Axes; there are also vases from Milatos, Palaikastro, the offerings' pit at Poros, and elsewhere. The octopus has been simplified to a wavy line encircling the vase. The shapes include one - handled cups on a low foot, small stirrup jars with only the upper part decorated, large coarse amphoras, etc. The sarcophagi of this date from Gournia, Palaikastro and Episkope, among other sites, are painted with animals, or more seldom, with chariot - races; religious motifs also occur : double axes, sacral horns and griffins.

During the last phase of the Post - palatial period (LM III C, 1200 - 1100 B. C.), the «Granary style» appears; this term is derived from the vases discovered in a house of the citadel at Mycenae, and the style itself is characterized by a very meagre decoration of horizontal bands. Contem-

porary with it is the «Close style», in which the designs are surrounded by dense fringes, bands and multiple borders. This over - emphasis on the decorative aspect robs the motifs of any physical identity. The octopus on a pot from the Dictaeon cave is hardly recognizable : it has no fewer than twelve tentacles.

PLASTIC ART

The same characteristics are noticeable in the plastic art, where the distortion of nature is also pursued, consciously at first. The features and the individual limbs of the figures are emphasized until they acquire exaggerated dimensions. That this development was a deliberate reaction against an overdose of naturalism is proved by the fact that it had already started before the end of Palatial times. Compared with the vigorous attitudes and the daring movements of those of the preceding period, the little clay or bronze figurines seem stiff, lifeless or limp. Among the earliest specimens are the goddess with the infant from Mavro Spelio, the dancing figures from Palaikastro, and the goddess with votaries from the Shrine of the Double Axes. Later, a new type of large clay idols of a female deity, made its first appearance in the shrines at Gazl, Gournia, Gortyn and Pangelokhori. The stylization typical of the time expresses itself in the reduction of the skirt to a rigid cylinder, and in the stereotyped, hieratic gesture of the raised hands. In the following phase, as in the idols at Karphi from the end of the Minoan epoch, the necks became monstrously long, the faces ugly, with long noses and chins, while the detachable feet peep out through an opening in the cylindrical garment. Decadence certainly had set in, at this stage. Some moulds from Seteia were used for producing figurines of this type, perhaps of glass paste. From Karphi, again, we have a rhyton in the shape of a chariot which illustrates the contemporary leaning towards ab-

straction. The oxen drawing the chariot have no bodies or legs; their heads are fixed directly to the frame of the chariot. The small clay figurines from Aghia Triadha, Patsos and elsewhere show a return to the ugliness and irregularity of the early Proto-palatial tradition; the eyes are indicated by clay pellets, the heads are screwed backwards and upwards, the shoulders are sometimes very broad. There are many bull figurines from Aghia Triadha. Sphinxes and centaurs are also represented. The typical Mycenaean figurines are common on the mainland but rare in Crete. In these the schematic treatment of the raised arms transforms them into crescent shaped wings. They have been found at Atsipadhes, near Rethymno, at Phaestos, Gortyn, Tylissos and Mirabello. Important ivories representing warrior heads, animals and stylized trees have been recently found by Sakellarakis in the impressive cemetery of Phourni, near Arkhanes.

METALLURGY AND SEALS

Various bronze vessels of this date are known from a tomb at Zapher Papoura and from Arkhanes. The same tombs, as well as tombs at Palaikastro, Sklavi, and Mouliana, have produced swords, some of which belong to a new type, in which the shoulders are sloping instead of being horned or cruciform. Spears are uncommon. Both single-edged, square-ended razors, and double-edged leaf-shaped specimens are found.

The jewellery includes necklaces of hollow gold beads shaped like argonauts or rosettes, gold-plated bronze rings, necklaces of faience and carnelian. Such jewellery has been found in tombs at Zapher Papoura and Phaestos, among other places. There are other excellent pieces such as the granulated gold ring from Photoula, Seteia, and the bull's head earrings from Mavro Spelio, Knossos. A gold mask,

with imperfect traces of the features, was discovered in a tomb at Mouliana.

Stone vases and lamps of fine quality are rare during Post - palatial times. Some of these (the bird's nest and blossom bowls) appear to have been heirlooms from the past.

During the Post - palatial era the art of seal - cutting gradually declined; it lost the power of invention and confined itself to the repetition of traditional designs. In the first phase seals of hard semi - precious stones with interesting subjects were still made. Lions attacking bulls, wild goats, ritual scenes; deities were portrayed, as in the previous period. The use of waterfowl and stylized papyrus flowers, recalling contemporary vase decoration, is typical of this date. The same is true of some representations of chariots, shown only in outline, the inessential details being omitted. In shape the sealstones are usually lentoid and amygdaloid, but cylinders are also known. It is plain that the craftsman is no longer in command of his raw material. The carving is careless, the reproduction of the motifs slack. Limbs appear disjointed from the body, and the long necks, the angular rigidity of the attitudes, bring to mind contemporary plastic art. There was a revival of the linear motifs also. The art of sealcutting, like the other aspects of Minoan culture, was falling into decay.

THE END

After the middle of the thirteenth century, according to the most probable theory, fresh movements of Central European peoples caused a wave of invasions in mainland Greece. Many centres of Mycenaean culture, such as Pylos, the lower town of Mycenae, and the settlements of Zygyouries and the Argive Heraion were devastated in consequence. But the ultimate destruction took place about 1150 B. C., when the Hellenic tribes from the North - west : Dorians, Aetolians, Pho-

cians and Locrians, who had remained outside the Creto - Mycenaean sphere of influence, pushed southwards, thrusting back the Achaeans. These, under the designation of Ionians and Aeolians, migrated to the Aegean islands and the coast of Asia Minor. The final fall of Mycenae and Tiryns ensued, and only in Arcadia did the old population survive. Echoes of this Dorian invasion lived on in the tradition of the «Return of the Heracleids» preserved by the ancient Greek authors. A little later, the Dorian tribes who had occupied the Peloponnese, sailed to Crete, and brought an end to the island's ancient and decadent civilization.

The Minoan and Achaean population of Crete did not disappear completely; they mingled with the intruders, and were gradually absorbed linguistically by the powerful, politically dominant Dorian tribes. A portion only of the old Eteo - Cretan element clung to its language for a longer time. This happened particularly in East Crete, in the district of Praesos, where inscriptions in an unintelligible Pre - Hellenic language written in the Greek alphabet, continued to be erected not only in the Archaic period (6th century) but right down to the fourth and third centuries B. C. Other groups took refuge on precipitous mountain peaks, such as Karphi in Lasithi, where their decrepit culture lived on. This phase is called Sub - Minoan or Protogeometric. Small tholos tombs, round or rectangular in plan, are found at Karphi, Kavousi, Vrokastro, Erganos, Aphrati, Kourtes, etc. Minoan shapes (stirrup jars, large and small craters, jugs and cups), and Minoan decorative motifs, although impoverished and degenerate, survived in the pottery, which is technically poor in quality. Finally the decoration was restricted to triangles, semicircles and bands. The fibula (or safety - pin) became widespread and must signify a change in dress fashion, and there is a parallel change in the use of

iron, instead of bronze, for the fabrication of weapons and tools, and in the practice of cremating the dead.

A dark, almost barbaric period of sad decline, devoid of artistic achievement, in which a sub - standard culture was evolved among the struggles for power of battling antagonists : such is the impression. At the same time, slowly but surely, the way was being prepared for the severe, martial civilization of the Dorian cities, and for the new blossoming of art. And throughout these cosmic transformations, the splendour of past glory still clung to the island, in the legends of a far - off time of peace, wisdom and wealth, when King Minos held sway.

CHAPTER 5. MINOAN RELIGION

THE «VEGETATION CYCLE» AND THE DIVINITIES

It seems that the «vegetation cycle», a feature of primitive cults, was fundamental to the religion of the Minoans. Technological advance has estranged modern man from nature, and the cycle of the seasons hardly affects the city dweller;



Fig. 24. — Seal from Kydonia; The Young God grasping two lions.

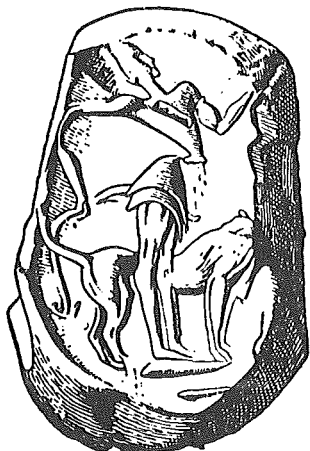


Fig. 25. — Seal impression from Aghia Triadha showing the Young God and a lion.

virtually no one is aware of, or heeds, seedtime and harvest. For primitive man matters were utterly different. The succession of the seasons and the mysterious phenomenon of the sprouting and the withering of plants, which he immediately related to his own existence, touched him very deeply. He followed the yearly death of nature with anguished anxiety, wondering if the trees

would ever bear fruit again, if the buried seed would germinate during the coming spring. Its unforeseen return filled him with inexpressible joy. Simplifying matters, we can say that the alternation between these emotions led to the personification of vegetation as a Divine Infant or Young God, who dies and is resurrected each year. Equally the creative power of nature assumed the traits of a Great Mother, who appears not only as a *Kourotrophos*, a woman with a child in her arms, but also as the consort of the Young God. The Sacred Marriage, the union of the goddess and the god (who usually dies shortly after his wedding) symbolizes the fructification of the earth.

Similar couples are found under various names in the Oriental religions. Cybele and Attis were worshipped in Asia Minor; Anat and Baal in Syria; in Egypt Isis and Osiris; in Babylonia Ishtar and Tammuz; in Sumeria Dumuzi and Innana. Aphrodite and Adonis, Demeter and Iasion form other comparable pairs.

It is probably that magical marriage ceremonies, celebrated in order to further, as was believed, the fruitfulness of the fields, helped to mould these religious beliefs. Thus the marriage of the King to a priestess was celebrated during the New Year Festival in Babylon. Even today, similar abduction and marriage ceremonies, as well as death and resurrection rites, are performed in some parts of Greece.

But the Young God is not the only mortal divinity known to Pre-Hellenic religion. It seems that the Pre-Hellenes believed also in the death and rebirth of a young vegetation goddess. The mother and daughter goddesses of



Fig. 26. — Seal impression from Knossos representing the Young God.

Eleusis probably have pre - Hellenic roots; this is suggested by the connexion between their legend and the cultivation of cereals, which were surely introduced into Greece long before the arrival of the Greeks. The ivory group from Mycenae, showing the goddesses with a Divine

Infant, is a good expression of these beliefs.

In many cases the Pre - Hellenic religion survived during the Achæan and classical Greek periods, and to this we owe the preservation of the names of some Pre - Hellenic deities mentioned by Greek

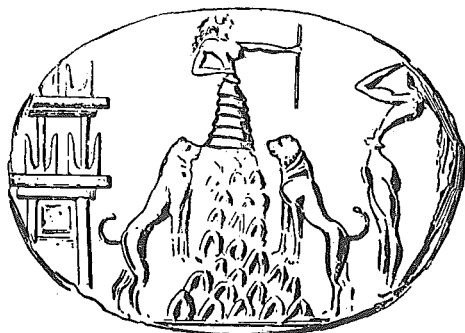


Fig. 27. — Sealing from Knossos with representation of a Goddess on a mountain peak.

and Latin authors, or found on Greek inscriptions, such as *Dictynna* and *Britomartis*. The first must be a goddess connected with mountain Dikte, while the second which means «Sweet Virgin», is probably an epithet of the young goddess. *Velchanos* and *Hyakinthos* are names of the dying god, while *Ariadne*, although her name has been claimed as Indo - European, is nevertheless a Pre - Hellenic Vegetation Goddess, dying yearly.

Many and varied are the forms assumed by the Pre - Hellenic female deity, and doubts exist as to whether these correspond to different goddesses or to various aspects of one goddess. But in all likelihood this distinction was vague to a Pre - Hellenic believer. Consequently, it would be vain to demand logical classification in a spiritual realm governed by emotion and intuition. As Mountain Mother or Mistress of the Animals, the goddess is shown standing between lions on a mountain peak; at other times she appears as a Tree Goddess, a Snake Goddess, also as a Dove

and Poppy Goddess. She is represented as a warrior with sword or shield, and on occasions as a Sea Goddess traveling in her ship. At other times she is seen as a Mother Goddess and *Kourotrophos* carrying the Young God in her arms. Various interpretations of these images have been put forward. The snakes have been regarded as a symbol of the underworld aspect of the goddess, or as the goddess herself in animal form; the doves as emblems of a celestial goddess, and the poppies, or more accurately, the seed-heads of the «sleep-bringing poppy» as attributes of a Mother Goddess who lulls the young to sleep. Many of these emblems were later associated with goddesses of classical Greece. Thus Athene succeeded to the snakes and the olive tree, as well as to the martial qualities of her predecessor, and Eileithyia to the responsibility for childbirth; Artemis inherited the wild beasts, Aphrodite the doves, and Demeter the poppies. The lions of the Minoan goddess reappear in the worship of Cybele in Asia Minor. In general there is a close affinity between the Minoan goddess and the powerful feminine divinities of Asia Minor, presumably because of racial affinities between the Minoans and the people of Asia Minor. The Phrygian *Cybele* or *Cybebe*, the Idaean Mother; *Ma* the Mother of Attis, and the Artemis of Ephesus are well known from later times, but similar cults are found in much earlier periods. A powerful solar and warrior goddess, with lion, panther and dove as emblems, was worship-



Fig. 28. — Seal impression from Knossos with representation of the Great Goddess.

ped in the city of Arinna during the first Hittite period.

The Young God of Minoan Crete is portrayed as a tamer of wild beasts or armed with shield and bow or spear and with a lion at his side. In other representations he is accompanied by a winged wild goat and a daemon bearing



Fig. 29. — Seal from Kydonia. The Young God between a winged wild goat and a daemon.

a libation vessel or by a griffin. The powerful gods of Olympus - Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo - seem foreign to the small pantheon of Minoan religion, dominated by female deities. But in certain cases even these male Indo-European figures were assimilated to the earlier gods. So in Crete Zeus

was identified with the Young God, was called *Kouros* (boy) and *Zeus Velchanos*, and was believed to be born and to die each year. Other divine infants, surviving from Pre-Hellenic religion were *Linos*, *Plutos* or *Erichthonios* and *Dionysos*.

In the Linear B tablets from Knossos and Pylos the pantheon of classical times appears in a fairly advanced stage. The names of *Hera*, *Athene*, *Zeus* and *Poseidon* have been identified as well as others, about which some uncertainty still exists. The phenomenon can be explained if we assume that before 1400 B. C. the Achae-

ans already possessed a polytheistic religion, born of the fusion of their own gods with those of the Pre-Hellenes, and that this polytheism was introduced by them into Crete.

In the ritual scenes, apart from the divine beings, monkeys and various fantastic creatures appear, no doubt representing vegetation spirits. The origin of these beings may perhaps go back to magic rites, in which men wearing animal marks took part. These daemons are shown attending on the Young God; assisting in the cult; and carrying vessels from which they pour libations before sacred boughs, or a goddess seated on a throne.



Fig. 30. — Gold ring from Mycena representing a wild goat, a male figure and an enclosure with the Sacred Tree.

Only a few of the Minoan figurines give the impression of having been objects of adoration. Large scale images of deity, as found for instance in Egypt, were not customary in Crete, although there is evidence that a big wooden statue stood in a shrine in the east wing of the palace at Knossos and there are surviving fragments of large figurines, probably cult objects, from Petsophas. Of course even small figurines, such as the Snake Goddesses could have been worshipped as idols, but it was probably believed that even human beings could briefly or permanently embody divinity and so members of the royal family and of the priesthood assumed the role of the god during the rites. The signet-rings and frescoes showing human figures receiving goblets from votaries could be explained in such terms. Small votive models of garments imply that clothing too was dedicated to the human incarnation of

the godhead. The alabaster throne at Knossos was intended, according to Helga Reusch, for the priestess-queen who, flanked by the griffins painted on the wall, personified the goddess. In the Royal Villa the throne which is set apart in a kind of chancel screen, shows that an actual person sat there to receive worship.



Fig. 31. — Seal from the Dictaeon Cave.
A Goddess between two griffins.

According to Matz, when the queen descended the palace stairs to the courts with the shrines, she represented an authentic epiphany of the deity to the host of ecstatic worshippers. At festivals the queen or princess-priestess was conveyed in a carrying chair or

palanquin. We hazard this guess on the basis of a small clay model of a similar litter, dedicated at a shrine among models of altars and other sacred objects.

In general the epiphanies, perhaps associated with the ritual ecstatic dances of priests, have a special significance in Minoan religion. Beings with wind-blown hair, poised in mid-air or in the far distance, seem to come down from heaven. On other occasions the goddess appears seated near her shrine or altar. But she is also able to take on the shape of a bird, as we know from Homer. The doves perching on the shrines had a special association with the deity. Since

the deity could assume the shape of various sacred animals, such as bull and cow, goat and snake, some of the Greek myths may be reflections of very ancient Pre - Hellenic beliefs: legends such as that of the sacred marriage of the queen - goddess Pasiphae, in the shape of a cow, with the divine Bull which leapt out of the sea, or of the rape of Europa by Zeus in the guise of a bull.

Whether or not the Minoans worshipped a bull - god is a matter of dispute. But the association of a beast so full of vigour with the powers of procreation is likely enough. It should be remarked that in the related religions of Asia Minor the

sky god and lover of the goddess is also linked with the bull. The Egyptians worshipped Apis, the sacred bull of

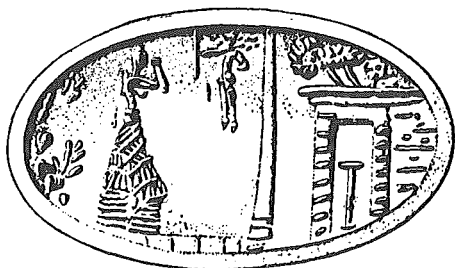


Fig. 32. — Goldring from Knossos with representation of the epiphany of the Young God in front of his shrine.

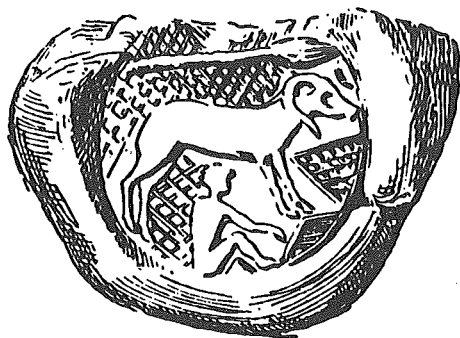


Fig. 33. — Sealing from Knossos representing a wild goat and a child.

Memphis, and the goddess Hathor in the shape of a cow with the sun - disk between her horns. Although it has not been proved that the heavenly bodies were worshipped in Crete, it seems that the goddess was associated with the moon, perhaps because the cres-

cent moon was suggestive of a cow's horns; and the male god with the sun, symbolized by the rosette on the forehead

of the bull-shaped Creto-Mycenean rhytons. The names of Pasiphae and Asterion given in Greek antiquity to the queen-goddess of Knossos and the Minotaur, seem to echo these heavenly connexions. The later myth of the goat Amaltheia, nurse of the abandoned infant-god, suggests, on the other hand, the sacred nature of the wild goat. It is no coincidence that small votive plaques of a cow and a wild goat suckling their young, perhaps incarnations of the Mother Goddess, were found together with the Snake Goddesses in the Temple Repository at Knossos.

The snake occupied a special place among the sacred animals. It was probably equivalent to the kindly spirit that protects the home: a common belief in popular religions and still found today in the Balkans. The «household snake» of the Erechtheum belongs to the same class. According to Nilsson, the snake in Minoan religion was identified with the Snake Goddess who was its personification. Yet perhaps it was also related to the Young God, as intimated by the legend of Erectheus. Others think that the snake is a symbol of the underworld aspect of the goddess, in her role as Goddess of the Dead. From votive honeycombs in clay found at Knossos, it would seem that sweetmeats and honey cakes were offered to this household spirit during the Minoan period, as in later classical Greece.

CULT PLACES - CAVES AND PEAKS

As a result of the excavations the holy places and cult practices are better known to us than the forms taken by the Minoan deity, which are still wrapped in obscurity. A typical contrast between Crete and the Orient lies in the absence of temples. The temples, dwellings of the god and centres of an allpowerful priesthood, found in Sumer and Egypt, do not exist in Crete. Here worship was celebrated in natural sanctuaries: in caves, on mountain peaks;

and in small domestic shrines, or in parts of the palace, which, outwardly at least, cannot be distinguished from the rest of the building.

Caves in which religious rites were performed have been mentioned already. Even during Pre-palatial times votive ivory figurines were deposited in the Trapeza cave, in Lasithi. On feast days in the Proto-palatial period, pilgrims from Phaestos climbed Mt. Ida as high as the Kamares cave, where they dedicated vessels containing various offerings.

Stalactites and stalagmites, which still impress the modern visitor, seem to have had a particular influence on the cult in certain caves. Seen in the half-light, reflecting the torches, they acquired a supernatural meaning for the Minoan believer. In these strange natural concretions he perceived fantastic beings, and they never ceased to arouse his interest. This is especially clear in the cave of the goddess of childbirth, Eileithyia, east of Herakleion. A stalagmite, with a much smaller one next to it, were apparently interpreted as images of the Mother Goddess and the Divine Infant. A wall was built around the idol, and vases containing various substances were offered there over a long period. The cult continued into Classical times; hence the mention of the cave and the goddess worshipped within it in Homer and other Greek sources.

The holiness of the far more magnificent cave of Psykhro can surely be explained in the same way. This was probably the Dictaeon cave of the Greeks, where the Mother Goddess Rhea was believed to have given birth to the Young God whom the Greeks called Zeus. Tables of offerings, figurines of votaries in characteristic attitudes, small animal models offered in lieu of living sacrifices, tools, weapons and double axes in bronze were dedicated around a built altar, or placed in crevices between the stalactites within the cave.

Much more important discoveries have been made by

Marinatos at another sacred cave on a low hill near Arkalokhori, which has escaped plundering because the roof of the cave collapsed in antiquity. A series of double axes, one with a hieroglyphic inscription, small votive axes of gold and some very long swords in hammered bronze show that here the goddess was worshipped in her warrior aspect, unlike the peaceful Eileithyia or the goddess of the Kamares cave.

Other sacred caves are the large cave of Skoteino — probably the sacred cave of Knossos, within which Dr. K. Davaras has discovered bronze figurines and a quantity of pottery; and also the Patsos cave, where figurines of votaries and models of sacral horns were dedicated.

Religious rites were also celebrated at the peak sanctuaries. The nearness to the sky, the wide view, the utter solitude, broken only by wild goats or birds, filled the Minoan with awe. To his imagination these remote places seemed the most propitious for the fleeting epiphany of the deity. There he adored the Mountain Mother, who was at the same time Mistress of the Animals. These sanctuaries are found not only on high mountain peaks such as Asterousia, but also on the more accessible summits of steep mountains such as Petsophas, Juktas and Korphe near Tylosos, even on low hilltops as at Profetes Elias near Mallia and elsewhere. Small shrines and altars with surrounding walls were erected; the summits were laid out in a series of terraces with retaining walls to accommodate the crowds of pilgrims who came up on holy days.

At the summer and winter solstices, especially during the Proto-palatial period, it was the custom to light on these peak-sanctuaries great bonfires which could be seen from a long way off. Into these fires were cast various offerings: small clay figurines of the faithful, both men and women, in attitude of worship — usually with their arms folded on their breasts, and also separate parts of the body such as arms and legs.

These have been explained as analogous to the ex - voto offerings of the present day; that is, as representing diseased parts of the body dedicated to the divinity to be healed, or as tokens of thanksgiving for the cure already effected. Furthermore, models of birds and of various animals, even of a sacred beetle, still to be found in Crete, were offered at the peak sanctuaries. Belief in the purifying and magic power of fire can be found in most popular cults; but the fundamental act of worship, the offering of food to the deity, was certainly not forgotten on these holy days.

DOMESTIC SHRINES

Many parts of the palaces and private dwellings display distinctive religious features, and one has the feeling that the Minoan was possessed by the idea of the omnipresence of the deity. At Knossos, the familiar sacral horns; the frescoes, either dealing directly with religious ceremonies or alluding to them; the double axe signs engraved on the walls and the pedestals for actual double axes found here and there, suggest that almost the whole palace was holy ground. Yet separate areas of a distinct architectural character, intended for purely religious functions did exist in the palaces and mansions.

By the Proto - palatial period the tripartite shrine had already made its appearance at the palace of Phaestos. This consisted of three small adjoining rooms, the central one probably higher than those on either side, as appears from representations of similar shrines from the Neo - palatial period. Behind these rooms at Phaestos lay another room, also a shrine; set into its floor was a clay table of offerings with a central hollow to collect the libations poured on to it. Benches, a variety of utensils used in preparation for the ritual, other offering tables in clay and stone and miniature altars, have been discovered in these

shrines. Outside there was a trench cut into the rock where the sacrifices took place, as the ashes and animal bones found there testify. A similar but more elaborate arrangement existed at Knossos in the West Wing of the Palace. Here we find crypts, and upper rooms with columns,

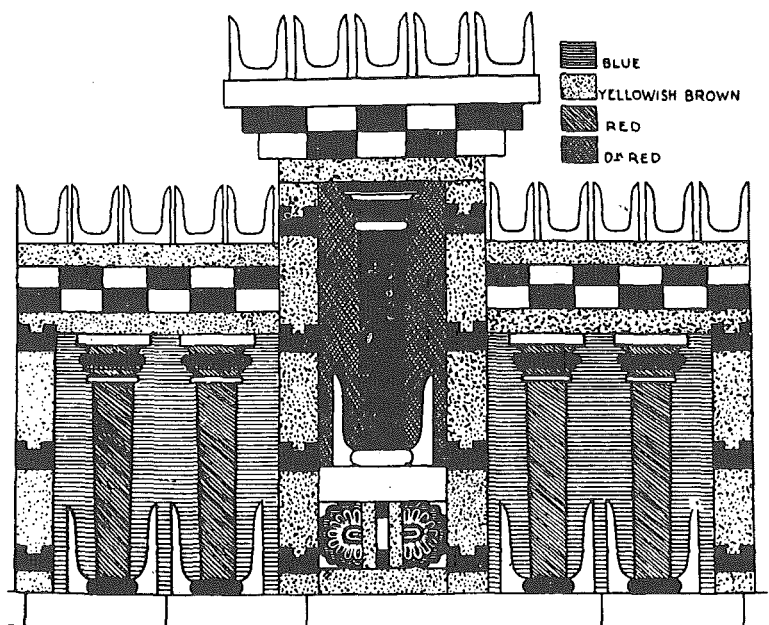


Fig. 34. — Columnar Shrine from a fresco of the Palace at Knossos.

but the tripartite scheme appears only on a short stretch of the façade.

Places of worship common to most Minoan settlements are the crypts with a square central pillar. Although some scholars question their sacred character, there is abundant evidence that religious ceremonies were in fact performed within these crypts. Thus, about two hundred small conical cups were discovered arranged round the pillar in a room of this kind belonging to a house on the Gypsadhes hill,

near Knossos. The cups still contained carbonized remains of vegetable matter. In the palace crypts at Knossos, under the floor, ashes and animal bones, remains of sacrifices, have been found. Here the pillars are engraved with double axe signs; elsewhere the bases in which shafts with double axes were fixed upright, have been discovered near the pillars.

These crypts were dark and consequently lit by lamps; they are also so small that a central pillar does not seem necessary to support the ceiling, but would appear to have been placed there for ritual purposes. Evans and others indeed maintained that the act of worship performed within the crypt was directed towards the pillar. We know of other instances of stone worship: the baetyls and the Herms of classical antiquity, the stone of Zeus displayed at Delphi, and the stone one raised by Jacob, according to the Old Testament, on the spot where he saw the heavens open. Jacob worshipped this stone by anointing it with oil, and probably similar libations were offered to the pillars of the Minoan crypts. For this reason the pillars are often surrounded by depressions in the floor; in other cases there are troughs and channels in front of them, into which drained the liquid which had been poured out. Other examples of the worship of non-representational idols are the baetyl of Cybele at Pessinus and, even at the present day, the stones in the Ka' Bah at Mecca. It is possible therefore, that hallowed by the engraving of sacred symbols such as double axe or star, the square pillars of the Minoan crypts became baetyls, or «dwellings of the god».

The rooms over the crypts, which contained the usual round columns instead of the square pillars, were also sacred. In particular, above the crypts in the West Wing at Knossos there was an area with three columns, which can be identified with the «tri-columnar» shrines shown on the wall-paintings. Scenes in which double axes and

sacral knots are fastened to columns suggest that the column, like the pillar, may have had a religious significance. Furthermore, there is a clay model from Knossos showing three columns, on top of which birds are perching, a sure sign of the deity's epiphany. Other examples show lions or other creatures such as sphinxes and griffins, disposed symmetrically on either side of a column, sometimes with an altar in front.

Another type of holy place, distinct and easily identified from the architecture, is the so-called sacred basin or Lustral Area. These are small areas set at a level lower than that of the surrounding rooms, reached by one or two flights of steps. Originally they were thought to be bath-tanks, but this is unlikely since no drains are present. On the other hand, tiny pottery jugs which appear to have contained liquids, have been found in some of these Lustral Areas and could have served for purification by sprinkling or anointing. Rhytons and exquisite stone vases, obviously libation vessels and wall paintings of horns, have been found in other Lustral Areas.

The shrines of the final Minoan period are also distinctive. They take the form of small rooms, often with a parapet on one side, on which were placed the cult objects. Shrines of this kind have been discovered at Knossos, Gournia, Gazi, Karphi, Koumasa, Gortyn and Aghia Triadha. On a ledge in the shrine at Knossos there were two models of horns, together with double axes, and figurines. One figurine portrays the goddess with a dove on her head. The others show worshippers or attendants of the goddess. A round offerings table and various pots, amphoras and cups lay in front of the ledge. On the balustrade of another shrine, installed within the earlier Lustral Area of the Little Palace at Knossos, were found one large, and three small, natural stone concretions, resembling obese female bodies, as well as a pair of sacral horns. Large clay idols of a female deity, to be discussed later, were

worshipped at other shrines of this date. The large scale of the statues and the general character of the shrines show that they belonged to the whole community. It is typical of the period that each settlement (e.g. Karphi or Gournia) possessed only one such shrine. The evolution from domestic or palace shrine to public shrine is particularly interesting.

I D O L S

In the previous discussion of the way in which the deity was worshipped figurines have already been mentioned. The Minoan tradition of the small scale female idol goes back to Neolithic times, when plastic images of a steatopygous or obese naked female appear. The complete nakedness (abandoned during later periods); the occasional delineation of the private parts; the care devoted to the making of some of these figurines; and also the fact that amulets of the same type existed during the Early Minoan period, indicate that these idols do in fact represent a goddess of fertility, probably a forerunner of the divinity met with during following periods in Minoan Crete. Miniature clay models of animals were dedicated to this goddess. But we cannot be sure whether the beautiful stone figurine of a male, discovered in the Neolithic 'houses' at Knossos by John Evans, is an early image of the Young God, or merely of a votary.

The Cycladic figurines continue the tradition of nudity. It is likely that these figurines do not represent concubines or servants of the dead person as has been suggested, since they resemble the large Cycladic idols, which surely were worshipped. Moreover, there are examples in which a Kourotrophos figure carries a child on her head; or is seated on a throne, as in an example from Teke, near Heraklion. On a Pre-palatial pot from Mallia the naked fertility goddess is incised with legs spread apart to show

the pudenda. Such representations did not offend primitive conceptions of decency; on the contrary, human procreation, closely linked to animal and vegetable increase, had a deep religious meaning. The naked goddess very rarely appears during subsequent periods; the chief exceptions being on a rhyton from Gournia, and a naked goddess,

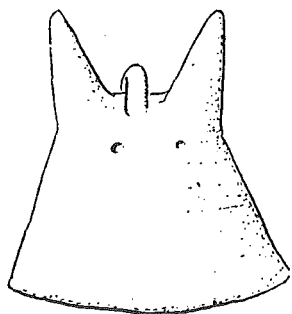


Fig. 35. — «Sheep - bell figurine» from Tylissós.

with birds perching on her head and arms, on gold foil from Mycenae. There are twin figures from Teke, showing how old is the tendency to reduplicate the Divinity.

The very curious «sheep - bell figurines» are a feature of the beginning of the Proto - palatial period. They are small, bell - shaped pottery objects with a suspension ring, two horn - like projections and eye - shaped slits. These figurines have been found at Knossos, Poros and Tylissos as well as in a tomb at Vorou in the Mesara. They have been interpreted as votive bells, as models of sacred robes and, more plausibly, by N. Platon, as imitating masks worn by priests and others assisting in the rites. This explanation is based on a «sheep - bell figurine» distinctly painted with human features: eyes, nose and mouth. Some of these objects are double, composed of two bells joined together, sometimes with a small human head or a little bull between them.

A fairly large figurine from Aghia Triadha dated to the beginning of the Neo - palatial period shows a goddess with numerous swellings on the lower part of her body, recalling the many - breasted statues of Ephesian Artemis of later times. It probably was an object of worship but since a clothed figure is clearly intended, the protuberances cannot be breasts.

The Snake Goddesses from Knossos have been men-

tioned already. The goddesses are portrayed as ladies of the court, wearing jewellery and richly dressed, apart from the breasts which are left bare, as if to underline the maternal and feminine nature of the deity. Matz does not regard these figurines as objects of worship but rather as representations of human beings personifying the goddess. Originally this shrine must have contained many more figurines; of those that remain, the two best preserved, of which one wearing a tall tiara is the larger, make the impression of composing a divine pair, perhaps a mother and daughter. It is conceivable that the appearance at festivals of sacred snake-dancers inspired this type of image.

The goddesses of the small Post-palatial shrines approximate to the same

kind of idol. Their heads are always crowned with emblems: birds, horns, poppies, and disks. Sometimes the head-dresses are wreathed with little snakes, erecting their heads above the diadem. Figurines entwined with snakes, and a fragmentary arm with a sword in hand and with a snake coiled round it, come from Gournia. At Gortyn a figurine was found holding snakes in her hands, while a bird perches close to her cheek. This proves that the idea

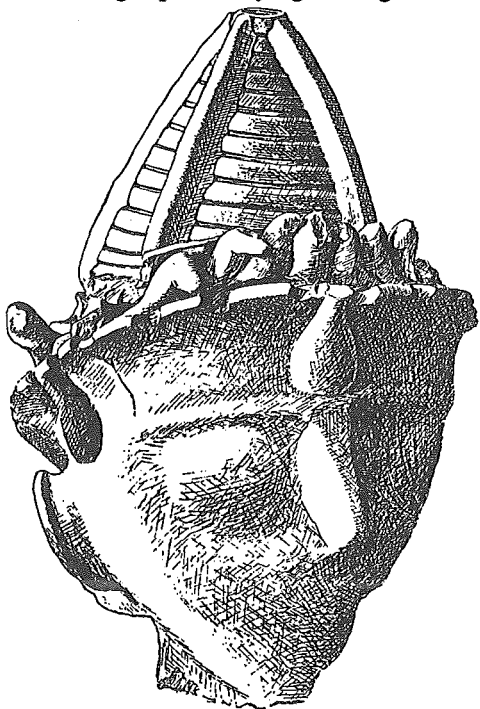


Fig. 36. — Head of a Goddess from Gortyn.

of two separate goddesses : a celestial figure, accompanied by doves, and a Mistress of the Underworld, with attendant snakes, is improbable.

Particular attention should be paid to the position of the arms in these later figurines. The hands are invariably raised to heaven as in the Christian gesture of supplication. The attitude has been interpreted as a greeting or blessing bestowed on the faithful; as the medium through which emanated the magic power from the deity; as a symbolic annunciation of the epiphany of the goddess, borrowed from the dance of the priestesses, who, as has been said, personified the deity. Perhaps it can be traced back to the influence of certain representations of Oriental deities, entreating high gods on man's behalf.



Fig. 37. — Priestesses adoring a Goddess seated under the Sacred Tree. Gold ring from Mycenae.

TREE CULT

The tree is of great importance in Minoan religion. On the larnax from Aghia Triadha the sacred tree is shown within

an enclosure crowned by sacral horns, and in front of it stand an altar and a double axe. This establishes that trees were really worshipped. On a gold ring from Mycenae a goddess receiving adoration is sitting beneath a tree; on another ring from Mokhlos a tree and a goddess are shown together on a boat. A woman, perhaps a goddess, stands with two small girls before the enclosure of the sacred tree in another representation. The worshippers of the tree, men and women, are sometimes shown standing nearby, at other times touching the branches or generally



Fig. 38. — Gold ring from Vaphio. A spring scene; orgiastic dance in honour of the Sacred Tree.

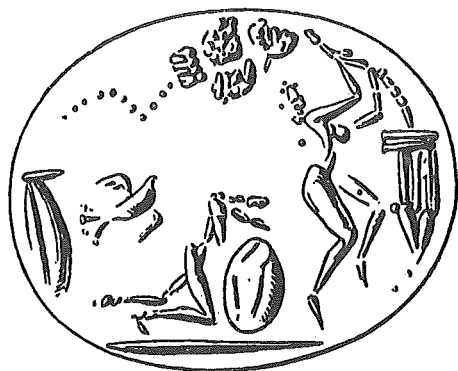


Fig. 39. — Gold ring from Phaestos. A winter scene; uprooting of the Sacred Tree and mourning for it.

tending it, even uprooting it. In the presence of the tree, orgiastic dances or scenes expressing deep affliction take place; these must be explained by the sympathetic emotions aroused in the worshippers by the revival or death of vegetation.

Probably different kinds of trees could be regarded as sacred, but in most cases and this is particularly true of the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus, it is clear that the trees are olives. The existence of ancient olive-trees, apparently perennial and impe-

rishable, perpetually sending forth new shoots from their aged, seemingly lifeless trunks, must have deeply impressed primitive man. The fantastically long life span of the olive, and its importance in human life, are sufficient explanation of its aura of holiness.

Tree worship was sometimes connected with the sanctity of the pillar, which has already been discussed. A parallel can be found in the Egyptian myth of Orisis, a dying vegetation god whose body, enclosed in a tree-trunk was used as a pillar in the palace of Byblos on the Syrian coast.

SACRED SYMBOLS

The many preceding examples show that symbolic manifestation of the divinity through objects associated



Fig. 40. — Sacral horns and a Libation - vase.

with its worship was more precious to the Minoan than its direct representation. Among the holiest of symbols was the pair of sacral horns. Horns were set on pedestals and altars in the shrines; more than that, human beings are sometimes shown in the act of worship before them. In other instances the horns are associated with double axes, boughs and libation

vases. In the pillar shrines horns were placed on either side of the pillar or in front of it, and this is borne out by the pair of horns discovered near a column base in the Temple-Tomb at Knossos. There exist model horns in clay, plaster and stone. A huge pair, more than two yards in breadth and height, was found near the South Propylaeum at Knossos. At Nirou, on the south side of the court in front

of the megaron, horns were apparently placed on a stepped base to receive worship. Horns probably acquired their status because of the sanctity of the bull, and the skulls of sacrificed oxen were hung from sacred trees and the walls of shrines.

Of even greater significance is the double axe. The ritual double axe developed out of the prosaic double axe of daily use, from which it differs in the following ways: the blade is much larger and thinner; the edge is expanded into a semi-circular curve; and occasionally the blades are reduplicated, so that the axe becomes quadruple. It is often incised with a linear design, more seldom it is decorated with perforations. The votive axes are shaped like the ritual axes but have smaller dimensions. There are ritual and votive axes from the sacred caves of Arkalokhori and Psykhro, from the palace of Zakro and from the villas of Nirou and Aghia Triadha.

On vases and seals the double axe is shown with its haft fixed between the sacral horns, or on the head of a bull; on the sarcophagus from Aghia Triadha double axes stand on stepped bases, their hafts garlanded with leaves, while the deity in the form of a bird perches on top. Elsewhere the double axe is combined with a «Sacral Knot», or with plant motifs. It forms one of the designs on ritual vases, and is carved on the pillars of the sacred crypts and the walls of the palaces. Double axes on truncated pyramidal stone bases stood at various places in the palace of Knossos.

The widespread occurrence in the palace of this emblem may explain why the palace of Knossos was called the *Labyrinth*: *Labrys* in an Anatolian language, and perhaps also in the Minoan, meant «double axe». The word *Labyrinthos* means, therefore, the «palace of the double axes». The same root is found at *Laubranda* in Caria, where Zeus *Labrandeus* or *Stratios* was worshipped and it is no coincidence that his symbol was the double

axe. At an earlier date, we encounter in Asia Minor the Hurrian and Hittite storm god *Teshub*, who is represented mounted on a bull and grasping a double axe and a thunderbolt. It has been suggested that in Crete too the double axe was the symbol of a similar sky-god. But this theory ignores the fact that in Creto-Mycenaean art the double axe is associated with a female divinity; seals from Kalkani and Knossos show a goddess flanked by lions and griffins, with a double axe overhead; a goddess is seen holding double axes on a stone mould from Seteia. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the female deity of Asia Minor may have had some connexion with the double axe: the name *Cybele* is not only cognate with *Cybela*, i. e. the caves, but also with the word *Cybelis*, which means «double axe». Ritual portrayals of double axes (and of bulls) have turned up even in the Neolithic levels of Catal Hüyük in Asia Minor, excavated by Mellaart.

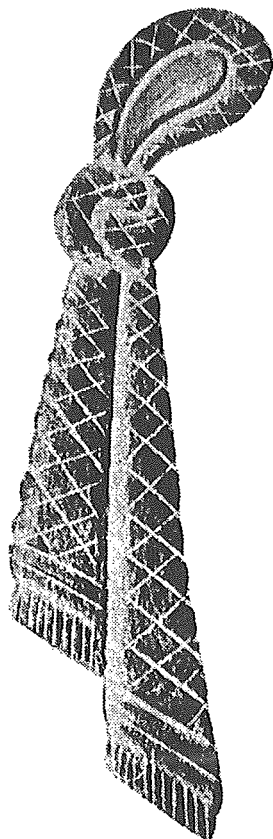


Fig. 41. — Sacral Knot from Knossos.

According to another theory (lately contested by Buchholz) the double axe acquired its ritual character because it was the weapon used in sacrificing the bull. On Minoan pottery the double axe is often painted above bulls heads. Even during the classical period heifers sacrificed in honour of Dionysus at Tenedos were slaughtered with a double axe.

Another symbol was the «Sacral Knot»: a strip of cloth, knotted in the middle and with two ends hanging down

like a modern neck-tie. It was used as a motif in pottery decoration, and imitations in ivory and faience were found at Knossos, Zakro and Mycenae. A Sacral Knot is pictured in a fresco in the villa at Nirou, and one is worn by the so-called «Parisienne» in the well-known wall painting from the palace at Knossos. As N. Platon pointed out, this figure represents a goddess, which confirms the ritual significance of the knot. Perhaps the Knot symbolizes an attempt to bind the deity by magic. Knots had protective power in Egypt, and one of the symbols of Isis was a Knot like the Minoan one. An analogy can be found in the protective power acquired by nails in Sumeria. The Gordian Knot has also been compared to the Minoan Sacral Knot.

It seems that certain other objects, directly or indirectly linked with the deity, had a sacred significance. Pieces of martial panoply, especially defensive armour: shield, helmet, and possibly breastplate, were looked upon as symbols of the goddess, or as her manifestation in non-figurative terms, no doubt in the belief that she numbered warrior attributes among her other qualities. In Minoan art military subjects are rare, yet it is certain that the island did not lack military organization, without which the existence of a great power with overseas influence would be inconceivable. This would explain the manufacture of excellent weapons for offence, and armour for defence. And it would be natural for the goddess to assume the character of a warrior divinity, furthering the enterprises of the King by land and sea.

Confirmation for the Minoan deity's warlike aspect comes principally from the discovery of large swords, found with double axes in the sacred cave of Arkalokhori, and of a sealstone from Knossos on which a goddess appears with a sword. On the Zakro sealings bird and ox-

headed female daemons are shown wearing helmets. These representations, apart from the Gournia figurine, are earlier than the Achæan establishment in Crete; they cannot, consequently, be attributed to the warlike Achæan mentality.



Fig. 42. — Seal from Knossos representing an armed Goddess.

A representation of a goddess with a large figure - of - eight shield, standing among worshippers near an altar, was found at Mycenæ. A small figure in mid - air, with a shield and javelin, appears on a ring from Mycenæ. These images are comparable to the *Palladia*, small armed figurines of Athena, of classical date.

When a single weapon or piece of armour is portrayed, such as the shield, it can be interpreted as a symbol or abbreviated representation of the warrior goddess. However, the opposite view is also maintained, that the worship of the weapon as an independent entity precedes the anthropomorphic image. There are instances of weapon and armour worship from Greek and Roman times; we know of the *ancilia*, sacred shields of the Romans, which, it was believed, had fallen from heaven. The shield and the helmet could easily acquire prophylactic properties, and in fact there do exist small models of shields used as amulets.

Whatever view is held about the sanctity of arms and armour during Creto - Mycenaean times, there can be no doubt that in many cases the shields and helmets have a ritual character. For instance, a helmet is incised on a bronze double axe; on seals and sealings figure - of - eight shields appear near shrines, pillars, wild goats and other

sacred animals. A shield of the same type and a helmet are shown on typical ritual vessels from a tomb near Knossos. Libation vases, like the large and beautiful jug from Katsaba, are decorated with small shields in relief.

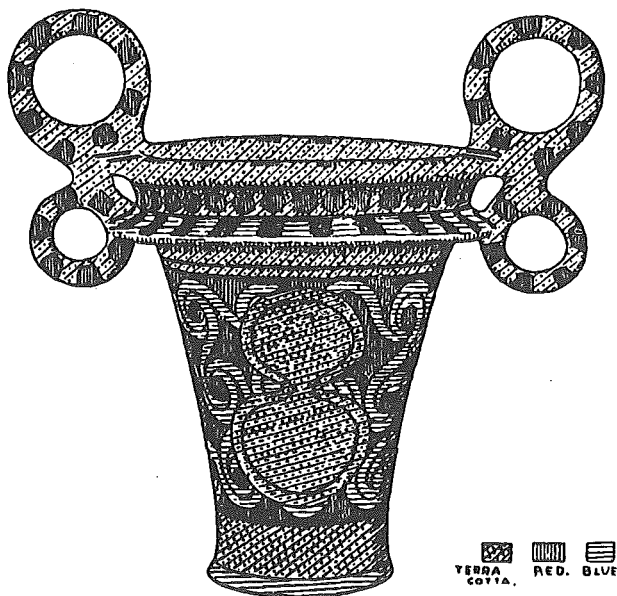


Fig. 43. — Ritual vessel decorated with a figure - of - eight shield.

Warrior's helmets are painted on an amphora, also from Katsaba. Large figure - of - eight shields probably hung on the walls of the King's Megaron at Knossos, and are pictured on wall paintings in a neighbouring room. These shields were made of bulls hides, which would have provided an additional reason for their sanctity: the hide of the sacred beast, after his sacrifice, could become the means of deliverance and preservation in the shield. The discovery of a rhyton in the King's Megaron shows that rites were indeed performed there. Nevertheless, although on one sealing a woman appears in an attitude of ado-

ration in front of a shield, it is not quite certain that shields constituted objects of worship.

Another sacred emblem was the cross and its variations such as the star, swastika and wheel. The cross is often found on seals and sealings and is sometimes met with, in the form of an X, between the horns of a bull.

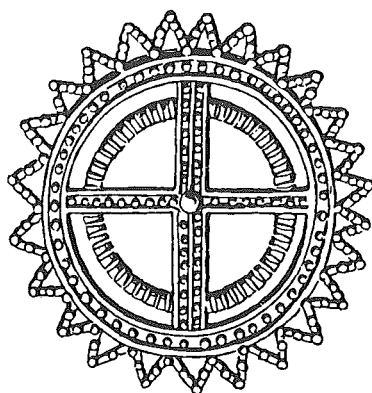


Fig. 44. — Cross and wheel from the stone mould of Seteia.

One of the most important examples is the stone cross from the Temple Repositories of Knossos. It is certainly neither a simple decorative motif, nor related to the Christian cross of martyrdom. On the most likely theory, the cross and wheel symbolize the sun. The arms of the cross represent the rays of the sun or star; the wheel, the solar disk, which primitive man some-

times conceived as a chariot wheel cleaving the sky.

To obtain the benevolent assistance of the deity and to avert evil, use was made of the symbols already discussed, but also of magic amulets or talismans of various shapes which were worn by the faithful. This category includes the so-called talismanic or protective class of sealstones, to which magic powers were evidently attributed; these were decorated with vases, eyes, ears and monstrous beings reminiscent of the Gorgons of Classical Greece. A faint echo of this belief lives on in the superstition found among modern Cretan peasants that these sealstones or «milk-stones» will increase the milk supply of any mother who wears one as an amulet. Earlier seals also exist, with hieroglyphic inscriptions, perhaps spells or incantations. There are talismans in the shape of a human foot, a figure-of-eight shield, an ear, an eye. But the gold

amulet from Aghia Triadha minutely engraved with a scorpion, snail, spider, snake, and a hand, is the most distinctive known from Minoan Crete.

ALTARS AND RITUAL VESSELS

Among the equipment used in the rites, altars occupied an important place. Rectangular altars, built of hewn stone, of which only the bases survive, stood in the West Court of the palace at Knossos, and also at Aghia Triadha. A stepped altar still stands in the Central Court at Phaestos. According to the reliefs on stone vases from Zakro and Knossos the altars were surmounted with sacral horns; the sacrifice of victims and the burning of offerings probably took place upon them. But innocent oblations such as branches, fruit, wine and other liquids were also presented upon them. Tables of offering, «fruit stands» and cups were found in a layer of ash round a similar erection in the Dictaeon cave. An altar found below ground level in the Central Court at Mallia, may have been intended to procure the complete incineration of the sacrifices.

Besides these, there were small movable stone altars with slightly concave sides; these, too, were crowned with horns and sacred boughs. Such altars have been discovered in the House of the High Priest at Knossos, in the palace of Mallia, and at Arkhanes. A little altar from Knossos made of *poros* limestone is decorated with reliefs of double axes and horns. These little altars were doubtless used only for the display of the offerings.

The «tables of offerings» had a similar function. These

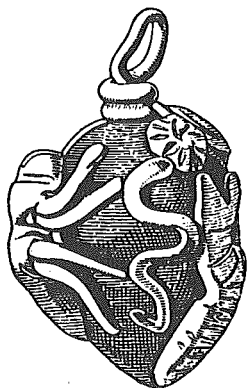
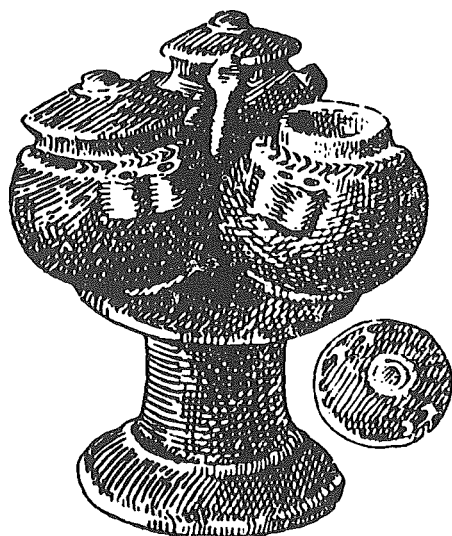


Fig. 45. — Gold amulet from Aghia Triadha.

were low rectangular slabs, of small dimensions, either flat-topped, or with a round or square hollow, usually shallow. The hollow no doubt served to collect liquids



poured from libation vessels. The clay table of offerings from Phaestos already mentioned belongs to this category. During Neo-palatial times round tripod tables were made, both in plaster and clay; a considerable number were discovered in the villa at Nirou. There are also stone tables, shaped like lamps on high pedestals, and pottery fruit stands for offer-

Fig. 46. — Early Minoan clay kernos from Messara.

ings of fruit.

A familiar cult vessel used in Minoan rites is the *kernos*, named after similar vases used in the worship of Demeter during Classical times. The *kernoi* (from the verb *kerannymi*, to mix) were vases with two, three, or more containers for the different kinds of offerings. The so called «salt cellars», simple rectangular stone *kernoi*, as well as clay *kernoi*, formed by uniting two or three cups or small vases, to a common base, occur in Early Minoan tombs. The first palace of Phaestos produced a stone kernos with a series of cavities in its upper surface. The best-known specimen is the round stone kernos from Mallia, with an upper surface containing many shallow hollows and a large central one. This was evidently used for the *panspermia* offerings: a pre-

sentation of small quantities of all kinds of grain and agricultural produce. A Proto-geometric kernos from Kourtes consists of a circle of small pots springing from a hollow ring. Between the pots stand little figures in attitudes of prayer.

A passage from Athenaeus informs us that during the Classical period small amounts of all kinds of grain; wheat, barley, oats; various legumes, such as lentils, beans and vetch; liquids, such as oil, milk, wine and honey; white poppies (probably opium poppy - seed); and unwashed sheep's wool, were placed in the little cups. *Palathion* i.e. strings of dried figs or a sweetmeat made from various fruits, was probably placed in the central hollow of the kernos.

Xanthoudides interpreted this rite by comparing it with Christian practices connected with harvest which are still observed in Crete to this day. The *aparchai*, or first fruits of the earth, grapes, figs and so on, are brought to the church to be blessed by the priest. On great feast days bread, wine, olive oil, and wheat are also presented. The priest censes the offerings, blesses them and prays for a good harvest, saying: «Lord, bless this bread, corn, wine and oil; multiply them, and sanctify those partaking of them». Afterwards the offerings are shared among the landowner, the congregation and the priest. In old Cretan monasteries a device comparable to a kernos, a combination of candlesticks and vials to hold wheat, oil and wine, can still be found.

The modern *polysporia* (fruit and cereals boiled together) and the *kollyva* (wheat, almonds and pomegranates), still offered to the dead, can throw light on the significance of the ancient *panspermia*.

The large Minoan kernoi may have been used for rites of this kind. By blessing a token quantity of each agricultural product the Minoans may have hoped to exert a magic influence on nature and so obtain an abun-

dant crop. At the same time offerings and thanksgivings to the deity for the harvest already gathered in would not have been forgotten. In other cults an analogous symbol of a good harvest is the garland of flowers and fruit; the circular Minoan *kernos* is essentially a wreath, symbolizing — and foretelling — the natural fruitfulness of the round of the seasons.

The theory that *kernoi* were not ritual vessels, but were used for games of chance, can no longer be upheld, since a similar *kernos* was discovered at Khrysolakkos, the cemetery of Mallia.

The *rhyton*, a word derived from the Greek verb *rheo* (flow), are vases provided not only with a mouth, through which they were filled, but also with an opening in the base for outflow, and they were used for pouring libations. The impractical shape of these rhytons, and the richness and beautiful workmanship displayed by so many of them, prove that they were indeed cult vessels. In a sealing, a votary is seen proffering a conical rhyton to a seated goddess. From the rhyton the liquid was poured either into a vessel receiving the libation or directly into the lap of Mother Earth.

The rhytons in human or animal shape, or in the shape of an animal's head, fall into a special category. Religious sensibility apparently suggested to primitive man that the cult vessel should, if possible, copy the form of the sacred animal or even of the deity itself. In conformity with this principle, Pre-palatial rhytons from Mokhlos and Mallia in the shape of a woman, probably the Great Mother, with holes in the breasts for pouring, were perhaps originally used for offerings of milk, while the rhytons shaped like a bull, or a bull's head, would seem the vessel of choice for the libation of blood from the sacrificed ox, although doubtless used for liquids of every kind. Others exist in the shape of the head of a lioness (a sacred beast, companion of the goddess) and a triton

shell. There are simpler types, like the oval and conical examples in stone and pottery, but the thyton from Gournia in the form of a pregnant woman with the outlet in the pudenda, and the sub-Minoan chariot rhyton from Karphi, filled through the head of the charioteer, and draining through the muzzle of one of the draught oxen, are curious fancies indeed.

The tubular clay vessels from the Late Minoan shrines, resembling the Minoan water pipes in their loop handles and general shape, remain a puzzle. These vessels are sometimes encircled by snakes in relief, and this is why Evans supposed them to be dwellings of the sacred snake. He thought the miniature cups attached to the sides of some of these pipes were used for milk offerings to the snake. However, similar pipes discovered at the Gortyn shrine have bulls' heads and wild goats in relief. This indicates that the sacred animals represented on the vessel did not necessarily inhabit it. Consequently it appears more likely that these tubular vessels, were stands of little cups used for pouring libations. The theory of Miss Boyd: namely that a tubular vessel lay on a tripod table of offerings in the Gournia shrine, does not receive confirmation.

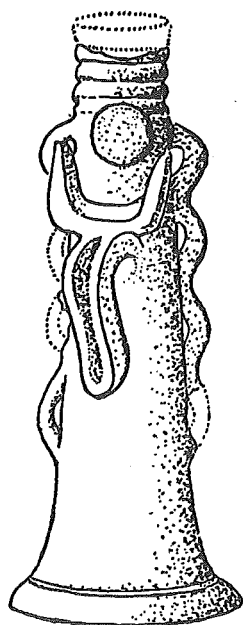


Fig. 47. — Snake tube from Gournia.

The «squat alabastra», low and very wide vases in pottery or stone, filled through a narrow circular mouth, have been found in the Throne Room at Knossos and in tombs of Palatial date. The very heavy stone alabastra of the Throne Room were found on the floor near a pithos from which, presumably, they were to be filled during

the ceremony. Their shape and weight are probably designed to prevent them from overturning, but at the same time suggest that the libation had to remain in contact with the ground; thus the table of offerings at Phaestos was permanently fixed in a hollow scooped out of the earth, and the great kernos at Mallia, too, always rested on the ground.

Fairly large scale models of temples, with altars and sacral horns, come from Gournia and Karphi. These seem to have been used as stands for ritual vases or bowls containing oblations. Small votive models of round temples with doors, Post-palatial and Sub-Minoan in date, have been found at Knossos, Amnisos, Arkhanes, Phaestos, Karphi and Kydonia. The temple from Knossos contained a figurine of the goddess with raised hands. The Proto-geometric miniature temple from Arkhanes also contains a figure of the goddess, and on the roof, on either side of the chimney, sit two companion figures, guardians or worshippers, looking down the vent into the inside of the temple.

WORSHIP AND PRIESTHOOD

The Minoan believer prayed to his deity in various ways. The votary before the shrine of the invisible deity does not bow or kneel; he stands bolt upright, often pressing his clenched fist to his forehead. It has been suggested that the attitude is intended to protect the mortal sight from being dazzled by the apparition of the god. There are other gestures of worship: the arms are raised or extended, or crossed on the chest. The first postures express supplication and prayer, while the last perhaps implies that the worshipper is surrendering himself to the deity.

The offering of food and drink to the deity is, as has

been said already, the chief act of worship. On the frag-

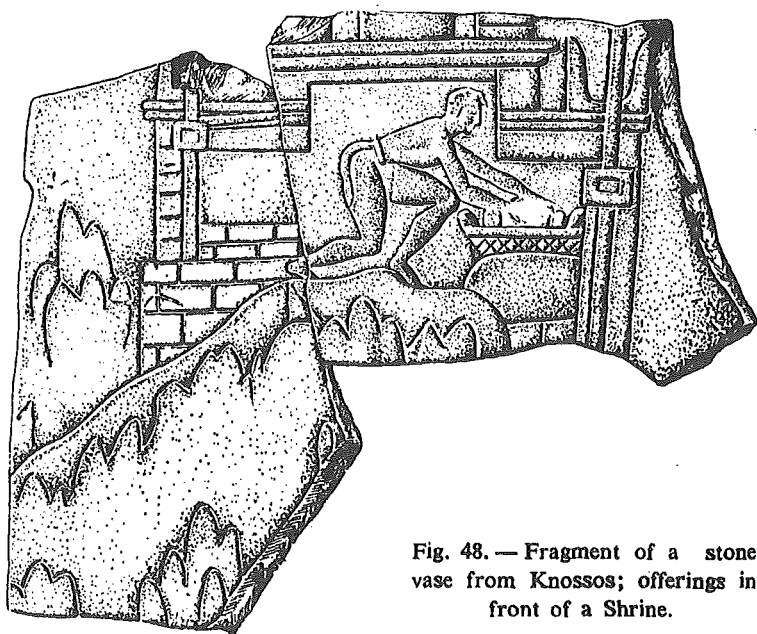


Fig. 48. — Fragment of a stone vase from Knossos; offerings in front of a Shrine.

ment of a stone vase from Knossos, a youth is shown arriving at a sanctuary on the summit of a rocky moun-

tain. The youth places a basket of fruit in front of the shrine. Other offerings will have included wine and, certainly, honey. Offerings of honey to the goddess of child-birth, Eileithyia, and to other divinities are mentioned in the Linear B tablets from Knossos. Offering ho-



Fig. 49. — Sealing from Knossos; offerings to a seated Goddess.

ney is easy to understand : to allay the pangs of labour in general, to mollify the deity.

In the blood sacrifices both large and small animals were slaughtered. On the sarcophagus from Aghia Triadha a bull



Fig. 50. — Offering of blood, accompanied by music.
From the Sarcophagus of Aghia Triadha.

is shown trussed up on a wooden table; the beast has already been killed, and the blood flowing from his throat is being collected in a jar, while other smaller creatures, probably goats or rams, await slaughter beneath the table. The sacrifice is accompanied by music from a flute. Subsequently, a pole is passed through the handles of the vessels containing the blood, and they are carried away by a woman who rests the pole on her shoulder. The priestess receives the vessels and empties them into a huge vat standing between the double axes. This must have been the climax, the most sacred moment of the 'blood sacrifice, and it is accompanied by music from a seven - stringed lyre. In other cases, as in the shrine of

the House of the High Priest at Knossos, the blood or other liquid could be poured into a cavity in the floor and afterwards drained by a conduit.

It must be considered likely, on the basis of parallels from other religions, that the votaries assisting at the sacrifice partook of the body of the animal. The hides of sacrificed beasts were offered at the shrine, and this is the subject of the scene carved in relief on the Aghia Triadha chalice. It is likely, too, that as in Homer's description, meal was sprinkled on the head of the victim before the sacrifice. This would explain the presence of stone querns near the sacrificial area at the Phaestos shrine.

But in these most ancient rites, confusion arose between the actual object and its likeness. Instead of a real animal, the worshipper could offer a small semblance in clay or bronze. This explains the quantity of animal models found in the Minoan open-air sanctuaries. The dedication of a figurine of the believer himself in an attitude of worship signified his continued presence at the shrine. Not only the figurine but also the man himself came under the perpetual protection of the god. Clay models of clothing, girdles and thrones or litters belonging to the goddess, even miniature shrines and altars, were dedicated at the Minoan sanctuaries. The presentation of a small shrine crowned with sacral horns was an act of piety, comparable with its actual construction.

The dance surely constituted another manifestation of the cult. Two female dancers on each side of a goddess holding flowers, decorate a fruit stand from Phaestos, which goes back to Proto-palatial times. A similar scene appears on the interior of a shallow open bowl, again from Phaestos. A group of clay figurines from the tomb at Kamilaris shows four male figures dancing in a ring, their arms round each other's shoulders. The presence of horns on the base of the group emphasizes its sacred cha-

racter. From Palaikastro comes a Post-palatial representation of a similar ring dance : three clay figures in women's clothes dance round a central figure playing a lyre. Dances are also represented on rings, sealstones and sealings. On the gold ring from Isopata, women with bare breasts, probably priestesses, execute dance steps in honour of the apparition of the deity. Priestesses danced in the sacred

olive groves, as is shown by the well-known wall painting from Knossos. Perhaps the dancing girl with windswept hair on a fresco from the Queen's Megaron also has a religious significance.



Fig. 51. — Seal impression from Zakro showing a deer-headed daemonic figure.

The priest and priestess mediate between worshipper and deity. They are distinguished from the ordinary believers by their dress. On the Aghia Triadha larnax the priests and priestesses are dressed below the

waist in animal skins. The Egyptian priests, especially those officiating at the burial of the dead, wore panther or leopard skins. The animal hide, worn by primitive peoples everywhere, was perhaps retained in the ritual as a link with the past.

Another interpretation is also possible : perhaps the use of animal hides as a sacerdotal garment had its origin in masquerade. By this is meant the appearance of priests in the guise of animals or spirits and mythical figures, (the aim being, as in the rite of the scapegoat, to drive away evil spirits) especially for the protection of the Young God, whom they sometimes accompany. Another aim of the masquerade in primitive religion is the magic coercion of the spirits of vegetation who help to ensure fruitfulness. In the late hymn from Palaikastro, which must echo ancient religious beliefs, there is an invocation for the yearly return of the «Most Great Boy» as «Leader of the Daemons»; on

his descent the fields will yield crops, and the flocks of fine-fleeced sheep will multiply.

The priests, and more generally the personages who take part in the cult, often wear distinctive robes of Oriental origin, composed of diagonal strips of cloth. Sometimes they carry single-bladed axes of a Syrian type on their shoulders, no doubt for use in the sacrifices. Double-ended stone hammers, discovered in the Temple Repositories of Zakro, in all likelihood constitute priestly emblems of authority. The stone sceptre from Mallia is particularly noteworthy: the head is shaped like an axe on one side, and like a leopard on the other. Ribbons hanging from the garments show that certain figures either belong to the priesthood, or are temporarily assisting in the rite. The priests and musicians wearing long feminine robes fall into a special category. This practice has led to the surmise that, perhaps owing to Syrian influence, there existed companies of eunuch priests in the Cretan palaces. During a later period the eunuch priests of Cybele and Attis in Asia Minor formed a similar class.



Fig. 52. — Seal from Vaphio. Two daemons of fertility holding libation vases.

The priesthood must surely have included among its functions, as well as the offering of sacrifices and libations, prayer and the chanting of hymns in honour of the deity. In open-air ceremonies attended by a great multitude, the priests apparently used a sea-shell, the triton, to amplify the voice. It is worth remarking that the triton shell

was used in Crete until a few years ago by field guards, rural postmen, and shepherds both as a trumpet and as a megaphone. It served the same purpose during



Fig. 53. — Seal from the Idaean Cave. Priestess holding a triton shell.

the Minoan period : on a seal a priestess stands in front of an altar surmounted with horns and decorated with boughs, holding a triton shell to her mouth. This function of the shell perhaps accounts for the frequency of its occurrence within Minoan shrines. The narrow end of the shell has been cut away in nearly every case. Through

being used in these contexts, the shells acquired a ritual character : cult vessels and rhytons imitated their shape.

Exorcism was also one of the functions of the priesthood. The fame of the efficacy of Cretan exorcism in dealing with diseases and other afflictions reached as far as Egypt; a therapeutic exorcism written in the language of the Kephtiu has been preserved in an Egyptian papyrus of the 14th century B. C. Formulae for exorcising evil spirits surely existed, and possible the mysterious words written in the interiors of two cups from Knossos are charms of this kind : if the cup were turned upside down, the power of the spell would capture the evil spirit.

The offering of incense by the officiating priest was another ritual act. Censers have been found at some shrines, as well as in tombs.

BULL SPORTS AND OTHER FESTIVALS

When discussing Minoan festive customs, the lighting of bon-

fires on sacred summits on certain important days of the year has already been mentioned. Another cult practice was swinging on swings or ropes slung between trees or posts. This occurs in a popular religious context elsewhere; ritual swinging is known both from India and rural areas in modern Greece. Its sacred nature in Minoan times is shown by a clay model from Aghia Triadha : a woman, probably a priestess, is sitting on a swing, slung between two pillars on which doves are perching.

It is not known certainly on which days of the year the people of Minoan Crete held their great festivals. To judge from what is known about the Egyptian and other religions, the beginning of the year and of the month, and the anniversary of such great mythical happenings as the birth, death, resurrection and triumph of the God would furnish occasions for celebrations, joyful or mournful, depending on the nature of the event commemorated.

Without doubt the bull-games, which according to Persson formed part of the Spring festival, were sacred in character. These contests have been called bull-fights through being assimilated to the bull-fights of Spain. But in fact in the Cretan bull-games the bull was not fought, nor did the contest end in its death, although it may have been sacrificed at a special ceremony after the sports had ended.

In the Cretan bull-games highly trained young men and girls seized the bull by the horns and carried out a variety of risky somersaulting leaps over its back. It is likely that the sport took its origin in the struggle to capture the wild bull, *Bos primigenius*, which lived in the Cretan mountains. The sports which took place with captured bulls in the arena probably repeated the scene of the capture. The contestants were never armed, whereas in scenes illustrating the actual capture of a bull the men carry spears or nets. These bloodless bull-sports still survive in some parts of the Mediterranean; for instance,

in the South of France, the bull is merely enraged but not killed. Nevertheless, it does seem that the Spanish bull-fights are rooted in a very ancient religious tradition common not only to many parts of the Mediterranean basin, but also found as far east as the Indus valley and China.

During the Classical period similar contests were held in Thessaly, Smyrna, Sinope, Ankara and Caria. The most famous of these sports was the Thessalian «*Taurokathapsia*» in which men on horseback were engaged.

In the Minoan bull sports, which must sometimes have proved fatal to the athletes, it seems that young people from mainland Greece took part. Perhaps this gave rise to the myth that at fixed intervals seven youths and seven maidens were sent from Attica to be delivered up to the Minotaur.

Bull-sports are represented in frescoes from Knossos and Mycenae, as well as in relief carvings on stone vases, and on many sealstones and sealings.

Other athletic events took place at the festivals. On the carved rhyton from Aghia Triadha, on certain sealings, and on a miniature fresco from Tylissos boxing is represented: men wearing gloves and a helmet to protect the head from blows compete against each other. We do not know if these combats had a definite religious significance or if they simply provided a spectacular display on the occasion of the holiday. It is at any rate relevant that similar contests, re-enacting the victory of Osiris over his adversaries were held in Egypt. Wrestling is occasionally portrayed on Oriental cylinder seals.

Processions of priests, musicians and others assisting with the ritual were customary at festivals. A procession connected with an agricultural rite on the rhyton from Aghia Triadha has already been described. The men taking part in the procession are not carrying willow-tree branches for rain-making invocations as surmised by Forsdyke,

but implements for winnowing and reaping. The religious character of the scene is indicated by the presence of chanters, and of a priest shaking the sistrum, an instrument used in Egypt in the worship of Isis. But the use of the sistrum does not necessarily imply that the priest is Egyptian, as has been claimed. The men walk in pairs, and the march is a quick one, not solemn, as in other cases; it suggests that the bearers of the implements are workers on their way to, or returning from the fields. A ceremony and a hymn to the deity usher in the reaping, or ratify the great event after the corn harvest. Corn was closely linked to the chthonic powers, particularly to the dying and regenerating vegetation gods.

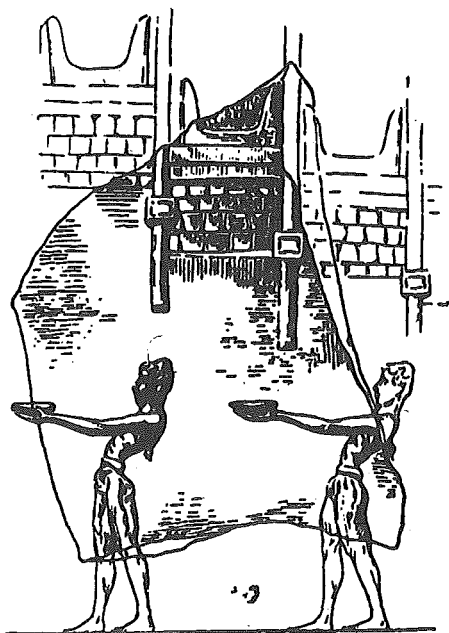


Fig. 54. — Stone fragment from Knossos showing a procession in relief.

In other processions, however, priests, priestesses and ordinary worshippers march silently, holding libation cups in their outstretched hands. A procession of this kind is shown in relief on a vase from Knossos. Evidently the procession is advancing towards the shrine or altar at which the offering will be made. On certain important days, Evans suggested, the sacred vessels kept in the crypts of the shrines, and usually seen only by the priesthood, were displayed for the public. This is the subject of the

great Fresco of the Procession, from the corridor of the same name in the palace of Knossos. Youths, perhaps belonging to the retinue of the priest, march past carrying precious vases and rhytons. Figures dressed in long female robes, probably musicians, walk in the procession, and a priestess, goddess or queen, receives the gifts. It would appear that the Prince with the Lily Crown, who is attended by a sphinx or griffin, and who may be an incarnation of the Young God, takes part in a similar ceremony. Although processions of this nature must have afforded an opportunity for the people to admire the contents of the sacred treasuries, yet it does not seem that this formed the sole object of the parade. It is more likely that the ceremony did not only consist of a mere display of the ritual vessels, but also comprised offerings and libations to the gods. On other occasions the marchers walked with empty hands, which were simply extended in a typical gesture of worship.

Comparable ceremonies are known from Egypt; there, the idol representing the deity, usually made of wood and small in size for ease of transport, was carried round from temple to temple, or even from city to city, the idea behind it being that one god was paying a visit to another. The circulation of the idol (as with the circulation of the icon in popular Christian worship) may have had a further purpose: the describing of a protective magic circle round the settlement. As is shown by the clay model of a litter from Knossos, beings, or even figurines, personifying the deity, were conveyed through the city in wooden carrying chairs, borne on men's shoulders. According to Evans, the so-called Processional Ways, narrow paved paths higher than the level of the surrounding pavement, square or street, were used for this ceremony, and for religious processions in general. Such a Processional Way links the main palace with the Little Palace at Knossos.

Possibly (in Evans's opinion) the goddess, setting out from the Little Palace on the appointed day, visited the main palace where the populace and the royal family waited her in the stepped Theatral Area.

It is not strange that a seafaring people like the Minoans possessed rites connected with water. There are analogous examples from Egypt, where divine images were embarked on boats for processions

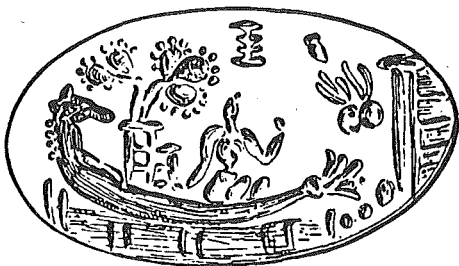


Fig. 55. — Gold ring from Mokhlos. The Vegetation Goddess on her boat.

on the Nile; sometimes, too, in similar circulations on dry land, the image was carried in a boat-shaped litter, on which stood the little portable wooden temple containing the image of the god. The sun god is shown seated within a miniature temple in his ship, which cleaves the ocean of the heavens. Sumerian and Akkadian cylinder seals also show the sun god journeying by sea. It seems that in Mesopotamia the shape of the upturned crescent moon suggested not only the image of a horned figure, but also of a boat sailing the sky: the moon god Sin or Nannar is called «luminous ship of the heavens». It is probable that similar ideas developed in the Aegean.

In Crete, marine festivals and religious functions were probably celebrated at shrines near the sea, or on islands. It is relevant that in the oldest known version, as told by Homer, of the legend of Ariadne (a pre-Hellenic vegetation goddess) her abduction and death take place on the island of Dia. A journeying goddess appears on the gold ring from Mokhlos; a small shrine and a tree are in the ship. Can this signify the transport of an uprooted sacred tree or bough, or does it imply symbolically that here we have the departing or returning goddess of vegetation? It should

be noted that in the Orient the journeying sun god is associated with vegetation, and plants appear on his representation. At all

events it can be no coincidence that this beautiful Minoan representation of a divine voyage comes from a coastal settlement.



Fig. 56. — Gold ring from the Port of Knossos. Departure of a divine pair.

lar. It shows sea-side shrines, or islets with sacred trees growing on them. Among the islets a goddess is rowing in a boat which also contains an altar surmounted with horns of consecration. The elopement and flight of a divine pair are depicted on other Creto-Mycenean gold rings.

The subject of the gold «Ring of Minos» from Knossos is similar.

CULT OF THE DEAD

It seems that in Neolithic and Pre-palatial times the population of Crete already believed in some kind of life after death. With the burials in rock cavities and tholos tombs they deposited not only pots containing various foods, such as meat, sea food, and olives, but also tools for every day use : obsidian blades for shaving, stone axes, mill stones, hammers and, later, bronze weapons, jewellery and seals. Ritual objects such as clay kernoi, zoomorphic pots, and figurines of the goddess were included in the grave goods from early in the Pre-palatial period. The presence of the figurines is probably explained by a belief that not only the equipment of daily life, but also the ritual possessions should follow their owner to his new abode. But the figurines may also suggest that a special connexion

existed between the goddess and the world of the dead. As has already been said, she was chiefly a chthonic goddess, and perhaps also, in one of her aspects, a dying goddess. The traces of exceedingly fierce fires can frequently be observed in Early Minoan tombs, and some think the lighting of these formed part of the funerary rites. If their purpose was the burning of remains from previous burials, it would seem that less importance was attached to the dead after the body had decayed.

From the end of the Pre-palatial period there is clear evidence for a cult of the dead. This is shown by offerings deposited independently of the burial, in special places outside the tomb. The dead were not simply supplied with food and equipment left in the tomb at the hour of burial; further offerings took place probably on specific days in the same manner as the worship of the god. Typical gifts, apart from the stone kernoi, are the inverted libation cups. These offerings imply that the dead continued to have need of the living; perhaps also that they could become beneficent or harmful; the dead, linked to the chthonic powers of vegetation, were possibly thought capable of wielding a special influence on the earth's increase. From the need of the services of the dead springs propitiation and cult.

There is a very interesting object from the tholos tomb at Kamilaris, near Phaestos, which shows that by the beginning of the Neo-palatial period it was already customary to bestow divine honours on the dead. A miniature clay model of a rectangular building, either house or shrine, with two pillars framing the facade, contains a group of four human figures. They sit on separate stools in front of tables of offering, while votaries enter the shrine carrying cups; two of which have already been put down on the tables. Probably the dead persons in question have been transformed into heroes or gods. It is of course possible that the group illustrates a scene from divine worship,

but even so its presence in the tomb implies a connexion between the deity and the dead. Another object from the same tomb is a conventional representation of a round building, possibly a tholos tomb, within which sit two people on either side of a low table; probably this is a supper of the dead. At the door of the building an observer stands watching the scene; he may be the worshipper offering the meal.

Tables of offering, tripod altars like those used in the shrines, ritual squat alabastrons, libation jugs, vases with figure - of - eight handles, sometimes decorated with apotropaic subjects such as shields and helmets, and censers are often found in Neo - palatial tombs. The censers served not only a ritual but also a practical purpose : the burning of incense and aromatic gums made the odour given off by the more elderly remains in the tomb a little more bearable. In Evans's view, the vessels containing charcoal — censers and tripod braziers — had the additional function of warming the dead. Sometimes tiny ritual jugs are found in the tombs. In contrast with mainland Greece, in Crete figurines are rarely discovered in tombs of this date. Some of the rock - cut chamber tombs have ceilings painted bright blue, symbolizing the heavenly dome; thus the dead person could still gaze at the beautiful azure sky of the upper world. The same colour appears on parts of the floor and on grave goods, censers and tripod altars; occasionally the wooden sarcophagi were painted blue.

When a new burial took place, little respect, as a rule, was paid to the previous tenants of the tomb, and sometimes their bones were collected and put in a small hole dug in the floor; the most precious ornaments and the seals belonging to the dead person were also hidden in the hole, to safeguard them against the risk of plundering. A tripod table of offerings was placed over the hole. The benches hewn out of the *dromoi* (the passages leading to the actual grave chambers) of the Neopalatial tombs

may have served as seats for those assisting at the ceremonies which took place in front of the tomb itself. Niches cut into the *dromos* walls, sometimes reaching to the ground, apparently served for libations, or as places for

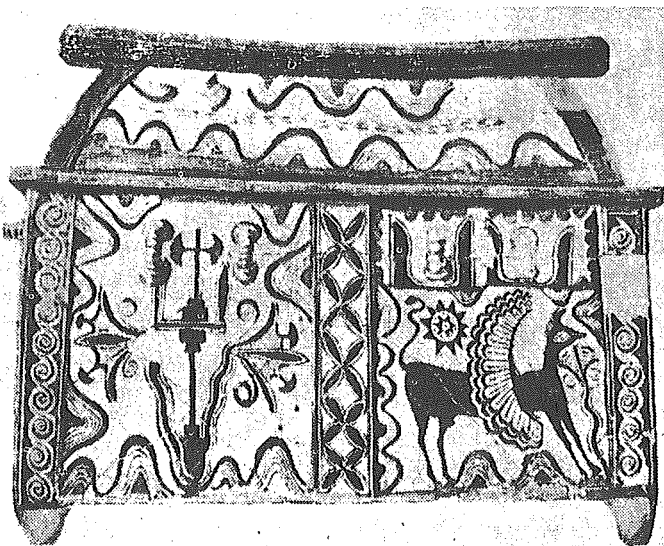


Fig. 57. — Clay larnax from Palaikastro painted with griffins, double axes and sacred horns.

standing the vessels containing food or drink presented to the dead.

The fact that some religious subjects were used to decorate the sarcophagi confirms the bond between the divine world and that of the dead. But it is not clear whether these motifs enhanced the sanctity of the dead, or merely secured for them the protection of the god. Instances are : double axes and sacral horns on the larnakes from Athanati, Herakleion, and again, accompanied by griffins, on a clay sarcophagus from Palaikastro. Bulls' heads in relief adorn a larnax from Episkope, near Ierapetra. A priestly figure wearing a long robe with diagonal bands is shown on the sarcophagus from Vatheianos Kampos. He

raises his hands in the gesture of supplication or blessing found in contemporary figurines; he may represent a priest interceding on behalf of the dead person, or as seems more likely, the tutelary god of the departed. On a larnax from Milatos a figure with hair streaming in the wind comes down from heaven, in order to drink from a large amphora; consequently the scene must refer to a libation. But we do not know if the figure, to whom the libation is proffered, is the soul of the dead or a goddess being propitiated on his behalf, so that he may be received and granted redemption.

In all likelihood the degree of religious honours conferred on the dead depended on their worth and rank during their lifetime. It was natural for royal persons, who while alive were regarded as kin of the deity, if not as its incarnation, to receive divine honours after death. This close bond between god and the dead man is best illustrated on the unique stone larnax from Aghia Triadha, clearly the property of some illustrious deceased.

On this larnax, according to Matz, two separate rites or cycles of worship can be distinguished, one addressed to the deity, the other to the dead man, although obviously a close interconnexion must exist between them. The first rite, as already described, includes the following elements: a procession of priestly personages and musicians, the sacrifice of a bull; fruit offerings; and a libation before an altar, two double axes and a sacred tree within an enclosure. Roughly the middle of the picture (if we imagine it unfolded into a continuous scroll) is occupied by the arrival of two goddesses at the shrine, in a chariot drawn by griffins. Double axes flank the shrine on either side.

The religious ceremony for the dead consists of a procession moving in the opposite direction from that of the first one; the men taking part are clothed in skins below the waist and carry animals, perhaps calves, to a figure standing behind a stepped altar and a sacred bough. Behind the figure

again is shown either the larnax itself or a shrine. The figure towards whom the procession is heading is completely robed in an animal skin, and so presumably can be identified as the dead person. There is another indication to the same effect : This figure stands on a level lower than the others, giving the impression that he is ascending from the interior of the earth, like the sun god of the Akkadian cylinder seals, when released from his tomb. Can this be a representation of the resurrection of the young vegetation god, with whom the great personage buried in the larnax has been identified, just as in Egypt all the dead were identified with Osiris? Furthermore, is the resurrection of the dead man or god brought about by the life-giving libation of blood, and the other ritual acts portrayed on the sarcophagus? The presence of the sacred tree and the sacred bough, and also of the thick clusters of leaves wreathing the shafts of two of the double axes show, at the very least, that the whole scene is closely connected with a vegetation rite.

There exists, however, another interpretation : the dead man or boy is set upright for the funeral service, which precedes the burial, as in Egypt. Moreover, it is suggested that the birds perched on the double axes symbolize not, as usual, the epiphany of the deity, but the presence of the dead man's soul; and that the goddesses riding in the chariot drawn by winged griffins have come to welcome and conduct him into the next world.

The cult of the dead also comprised dances, as is shown by the group of dancing figurines from the Kamilaris tomb, and chariot races. Horse drawn chariots appear on the Aghia Triadha larnax, and on clay sarcophagi from Zapher Papoura and Episkope, near Ierapetra. So the chariot races in honour of the dead hero Patroklos, described by Homer in the *Iliad*, reflect a Mycenaean tradition.

It is particularly significant that in the scene on the Aghia Triadha larnax one of the members of the funeral procession

is presenting a boat, or a model of a boat, to the dead man. This again may be a sign of Egyptian influence; in Egypt real ships were placed in the tombs of kings, and model ships in those of ordinary mortals, since the dead were believed to have need of them for the journey to the Isles of the Blest, or for accompanying the sun on his travels across the ocean of the firmament. It seems that the Minoan Cretans shared these beliefs. The idea of the Elysian Fields, where, according to Homer :

*nor snow, nor tempest strong, not ever rain,
but always the sweet breathing winds of Zephyr
does Ocean send...*

must probably originate in prehistoric Crete, since it is the home of Rhadamanthus, brother of Minos and likewise a Cretan King, and since a seafaring people like the Minoans were most likely to set their paradise beyond the seas, at the outmost bounds of the earth.

It is not known whether, running parallel with this belief in future bliss, the Minoans also believed in retribution for sin in terms of a future life of torment, as described in the Eleventh Book of the Odyssey. Nor is it known to what extent they considered possible the survival of the dead, in a form disconnected from the body in the tomb. The butterfly, one of the motifs of Creto - Mycenaean art, is thought to symbolize the soul of the dead. Its portrayal on the circular gold weights from a tomb at Mycenae may indicate that, at least during the Mycenaean period, the Aegeans believed in *psycho-stasia* or the weighing of souls, as a test determining fate after death. The Egyptians from very early times believed that when Osiris judged the dead, their hearts were weighed to discover whether they had spoken the truth and had led just lives. Bronze disks from weighing scales have been found in Late Minoan tombs in Crete.

Butterflies appear on a bronze double axe from Phaestos, and on the «Priest - king» painted relief from Knossos, which has therefore been interpreted as representing a divine figure wandering among the souls in one of the Elysian Fields. A beautiful ivory butterfly was found at Zakro, with small double axes and sacral knots, also in ivory; nor is this motif missing from the famous sealings with daemonic figures found in the same district.

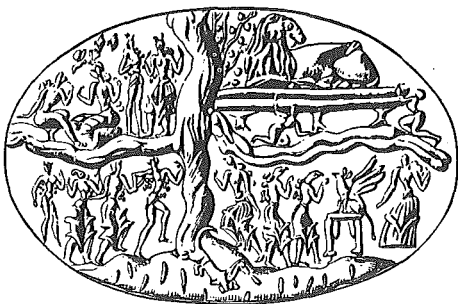


Fig. 58. — The «Ring of Nestor».

Butterflies and chrysalides, i. e. «soul cocoons» are shown as symbols of resurrection on the gold «Ring of Nestor». According to Evans, this ring presents scenes from the after life: a couple are being initiated into the mysteries of the next world, where the Tree of Life has its roots, and appear before the Great Goddess and a griffin seated on a throne. The «initiation» is followed by resurrection, and the pair returns to life. This is a fascinating and daring interpretation, but it is best to bear in mind that doubts exist about the authenticity of the ring.

Cremation of the dead was introduced into Crete about the end of the Post - palatial or Mycenaean period. This custom, which implies a completely new and much simpler conception of the phenomenon of death, was probably due to infiltration by Northern elements related to the Central European Urnfield cultures. The new ideas gradually mingled and amalgamated with the beliefs of the older inhabitants of the Aegean.

Such, broadly speaking, were the religious conceptions

and ritual practices of Minoan Crete. They reflect the emotional world and the lust for life of a people, who, although advanced in the rational organization of society, still preserved all the power of the imagination and a childlike freshness of feeling. Many of the religious ideas of the Minoans must have lost their original meaning, and it would be a mistake to interpret them in the way in which we interpret the beliefs of primitive peoples. It is certain that their religion remained closely linked with the fertility of nature, and some of its ritual manifestations suggest a magical technique devised to assist the productive function of natural forces, always conceived in anthropomorphic terms. On the other hand they never reached the stage in which religion dwindles to a dry and empty formula, and religious art becomes a mere repertory of decorative themes. It should also be stressed that the religious art of the Aegean, with a few isolated exceptions, abhors the monstrous. In its best moments it brings the godhead, completely humanized very close to man.

CHAPTER 6.

MINOAN WRITING

Shortly before the founding of the Cretan palaces about 2000 B. C., combinations and signs, which must surely constitute writing of a kind, began to appear on the Cretan sealstones. In origin this script is ideographic: it consists, that is to say, of ideograms, or pictures of concepts or objects which, while capable of recognition, at first lacked any phonetic value. Later the image acquired phonetic significance and denoted the sounds present in the corresponding word. In this way a syllabic script develops, in which each sign denotes a syllable. We can say that the Minoan script never progressed beyond this stage.

This first Minoan script is commonly called Hieroglyphic, the term applied to the Egyptian characters. Although there are some similarities between the Egyptian and Cretan signs, no close interrelationship seems to have existed.

In his book «Scripta Minoa» Evans tried to collect the Minoan hieroglyphs, and distinguished two stages in their evolution. The second of these is characterised by meticulous and calligraphic incision of the signs. This stage roughly coincides with the Kamares phase of the Protopalatial period, which lasted until about 1700 B. C. Hieroglyphs continued to be used after this date, however, in ritual texts.

All in all, Evans listed 135 hieroglyphic signs, but the total number should probably be greater since hieroglyphs exist which are not included in his catalogue. But the number shows that this script cannot constitute an ideographic system, because in that case far more symbols would be needed. Equally, a system using so many signs

cannot be purely phonetic. Therefore it must be assumed that some of these signs are ideograms acting as determinants, the object pictured assisting in the recognition of concepts, designated perhaps imperfectly by the phonetic signs.

The hieroglyphs are of diverse types. Some are drawn from the animal kingdom, and a wild cat, a wild cat's head, a lion's head, wild goat, ox and dove are represented; other signs picture parts of the human body, such as eyes, hands and feet, or even complete human figures. A number of signs represent vessels, tools and other objects of every day life: plough, lyre, skinning knife, saw, ship. Signs such as the double axe, throne, arrow and cross also occur.

Evans attempted to interpret certain signs as indications of different official positions. Thus in his opinion the double axe is the emblem of the «guardian of the shrine of the double axe», otherwise the palace of Knossos; the eyes mean «overseer or superintendent»; the trowel «architect»; the gate a «guard» and so on. Grunach, however, rightly criticized this interpretation as premature, since it is still far from certain what objects the symbols actually represent: whether the signs which Evans called «trowel» and «gate» were really intended for those objects. (With regard to the «trowel» in particular, Evans himself later maintained that this sign represents a skinning knife). But even if we knew with certainty what objects were represented by the hieroglyphs, it is doubtful whether it would be justifiable to attribute to them a meaning corresponding so directly with the object illustrated.

Certain recurring sequences of hieroglyphs, repeated like stereotypes on the seals, have been construed by some, on the assumption that some of the seals functioned as amulets, as the names of gods or as magic formulae to avert evil. It is unlikely, in any case, that these combinations

represent the names of the owners of the seals; the number of combinations is too limited, and their variety too restricted to render ordinary proper names. According to another theory the hieroglyphic combinations designate titles of priests and officials, or even possibly proper names that later developed into titles.

The hieroglyphs are often accompanied by various auxiliary signs : most frequently crosses, but also rods and lines. These are thought either to mark the beginning and the direction of the inscription or to specify that certain signs are ideograms possessing no phonetic value.

Hieroglyphic inscriptions appear not only on seals, but also on little clay rods, on disks pierced for suspension, and on small rectangular tablets. Moreover, there are clay impressions of hieroglyphic seals, as well as sealings on which hieroglyphs were incised by hand. Notable groups of this kind of objects were found near the north end of the West Magazines at the palace of Knossos and in a room in the north - west wing of the palace of Mallia.

The most important example of a hieroglyphic inscription from Crete is the famous Phaestos clay disk, discovered in 1903 in a small room near the depositories of the «archive chamber», in the north-east apartments of that palace. A Linear A tablet and pottery dated to the beginning of the Neo - palatial period (1700 - 1600 B. C.) were found with the disk. Both surfaces of the disk are covered with hieroglyphs arranged in a spiral zone, impressed on the clay when it was damp. The signs make up groups divided from each other by vertical lines, and each of these groups should represent a word. Forty - five different types of signs have been distinguished, of which a few can be identified with the hieroglyphs in use in the Proto - palatial period.

Among the characters on the Phaestos disk appear figures of men, women and children; heads reminiscent of the later Egyptian portrayals of the *Putesata* (Phili-

stines?) in the temple of Medinet Habu; birds, fish, insects, animal hides and parts of animals; branches and other plant

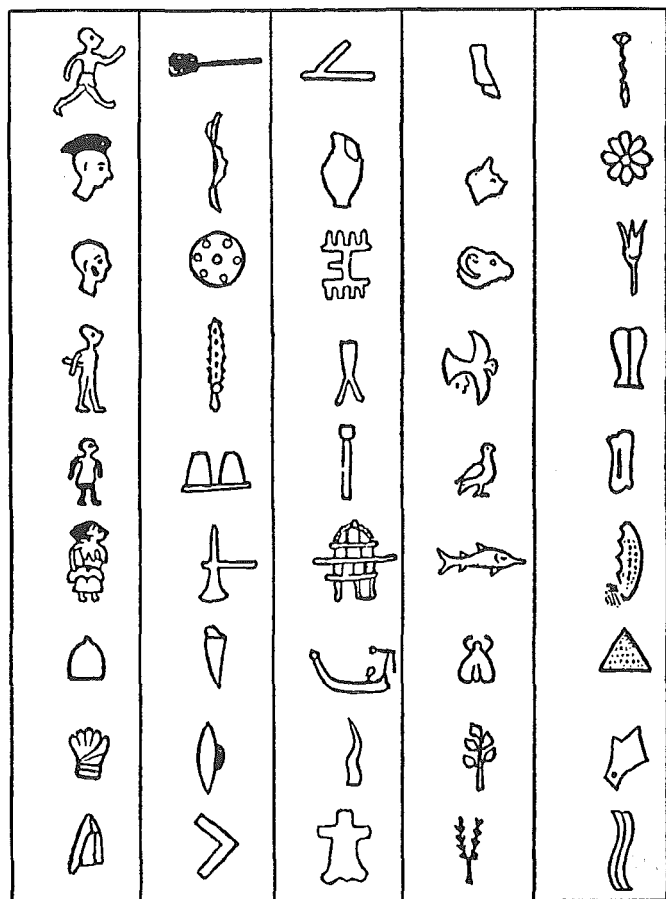


Fig. 59. — Signs of the Phaistos Disc.

motifs; and ships, bows and implements.

Some hieroglyphic sequences recur like refrains, suggesting a religious hymn, and Pernier regards the content of the text as ritual. He has compared it with an Etruscan lead disk inscribed with the names of deities. Others have sug-

gested that the text is a list of soldiers, and lately Davis has interpreted it as document in the Hittite language in which a king discusses the erection of the palace of Phaestos. Other interpretations put forward, attempting to prove that the disk is inscribed in a form of the Greek language cannot be taken seriously.

The theory held by Evans prevailed for a time. He maintained that the disk was not Cretan but had been brought to the island from south-west Asia. But the discovery in the Arkalokhori cave of a double axe inscribed with signs resembling those on the disk has led to the belief that it is in fact Cretan in origin. The inscription on the gold ring from Mavro Spelio follows the same spiral lay - out.

Concurrently with the Hieroglyphic script, another system, Linear A, was in use, the earliest examples of which were discovered after the war by Doro Levi at Phaestos. This script is termed Linear because it is made up of signs which, although derived from ideograms, are no longer recognizable as representations of objects, but consist of lines grouped in abstract formations. This script was perfected and its use extended during Neo-palatial times; the small rectangular tablets, most of which were found at Aghia Triadha, belong to this period. Similar tablets, with Linear A inscriptions, were found at Knossos, Phaestos, Mallia, Tyliossos, Palaikastro Archanes and Zakro. The Linear A script contains about seventy different characters.

It has not yet been deciphered. Nevertheless, scholars, by applying phonetic values known to be valid for the later, already deciphered Linear B script, have produced a variety of interpretations of texts written in Linear A. Thus, Georgiev interprets the contents of the tablets as being partially in Greek, while Gordon diagnoses Semitic traits, related to the Phoenician and Palestinian languages. He has identified Semitic names of vases,

terms of reckoning, and proper names in the Linear A texts.

Other experts have expressed doubts about the efficacy of the Etymological method, since even should the phonetic values in the Cretan texts correspond to sounds found in Greek, Semitic or Hittite, it does not necessarily follow that the texts are written in those languages or that the common sounds express identical concepts. The correct method is the so-called Combinative method: this seeks, by analysis of the articulation of the texts, to grasp the functioning of an unknown tongue through the probable mode of formation of declensions and conjugations. On the whole it appears most likely that the language of the Linear A texts is the pre-Hellenic language spoken by the Aegeans, and perhaps related to languages in Asia Minor. It is not, however, possible to establish with certainty any more specific links with particular Anatolian languages such as Luvian or Hittite.

Furumark, without attempting a translation, claims to recognize in the Linear A texts lists of people, and also of produce, such as wheat and wine, conveyed to the palace from particular places and by particular persons; he also finds lists of workers, probably slaves, engaged in various tasks in fields near the palace. Ideograms continue to appear in these texts, some signifying different occupations, others various kinds of vessels, and products such as cereals, figs, honey, and wine. Expressions for fractions, and a decimal arithmetical system have been identified.

Brief inscriptions in this script occur on wall plaster at Knossos and Aghia Triadha, on a fair number of sealings, and on pithoi from various sites. The inscriptions on the pithoi usually have three or four signs, are consequently trisyllabic or tetrasyllabic, and are therefore supposed to denote proper names belonging to the owner or maker of the pithos, although names of gods, descriptions of the contents and place names

cannot be excluded.

Comparable brief inscriptions are found on small stone tables of offerings and on ritual stone vases. The word *A-sa-sa-ra*, conjectured to be the name of a goddess, occurs on inscriptions of this kind from Palaikastro, Psykhro, Knossos, and Arkhanes, while the words *A-ta-no*, *no-pi-na*, *ma-na*, *Ku-pa-na-tu-na*, have been deciphered on a stone bowl from Apodoulou. Short Linear A inscriptions have been discovered outside Crete, too, for instance at Melos and Thera.

Another script, akin to the Linear A of Crete, came into use in Cyprus at about 1500 B. C. Half of the characters in an inscription from Enkomi are identical with those of the Minoan Linear A. This script, undeciphered as yet, is called Cypro-Minoan, and occurs, although with a varying number of characters, from the 15th to the 11th centuries B. C. on pottery, tablets and bronze ingots.

A gap followed in which we possess no written material from Cyprus, later the Cyprian Syllabic Script made its appearance which, particularly from the 6th century B. C. onward, was widely adopted and found a diversity of uses, in coin superscriptions, tomb inscriptions and on the bronze plaque from Idalion. This script was deciphered by Lang and Smith with the aid of a bilingual Cypro-Phoenician inscription and usually proves to be a form of Greek, or more seldom an unknown «Eteo-Cyprian» dialect. Only half of the characters of the Cyprian Syllabic Script are common to both, it and to the prehistoric Cypro-Minoan script.

The last stage in the evolution of Cretan writing was reached during the 15th century B. C., with the creation of the Linear B script. The Achaeans who, as has already been said, took possession of Crete about 1450 B. C., made use of this new script for the first recording of the Greek, or more precisely, the Mycenaean language. The decipherment in 1952

for which Ventris and Chadwick were responsible, and which was founded on previous observations by A. Cober, has gained almost universal acceptance. Objections are still raised by Grumach, Beatty and Eilers, however, and there are other scholars who reserve judgement.

The fact remains that Linear B is not suitable for giving satisfactory reproduction of the Greek language, and consequently each group of signs, i.e. each word, can be read in a number of different ways. But some encouraging readings do exist, confirmed by the accompanying ideograms. For instance, the transliterations *ti-ri-po* and *ti-ri-po-de* on the famous tablet of the tripods from Pylos are corroborated by ideograms, inscribed opposite the characters, representing tripod vessels. An adequate number of word groups, as well, when transliterated according to Ventris's system, manage to make good sense. Linear B inscriptions have been found at Knossos and Pylos, a smaller number at Mycenae, and also at Thebes during the excavations by Platon and Touloupa. There are also inscriptions on pottery from Knossos, Tiryns, Thebes, Eleusis and Orchomenos.

The tablets were business accounts. All the property of the king was recorded : male and female slaves; flocks and herds; various kinds of agricultural produce; chariots and chariot parts; pieces of armour etc. Other tablets are concerned with offerings to deities, troop movements, grants of land, deliveries of different commodities, and so on. The tablets from Knossos and Pylos provide information about the social make-up and organization of the Mycenaean kingdoms, and acquaint us with official titles and human and divine names.

CHAPTER 7.

ECONOMY AND TRADE

It used to be believed that Minoan Crete, especially in the east, possessed urban institutions and independent merchant cities; there was talk of «imports and exports», «ship owners», and «merchant houses». Lately, however, it has been questioned whether concepts such as these, derived from more advanced stages of economic development, can justifiably be applied to the Minoan period. Instead a different theory has been generally adopted. According to this, the palaces were the focal points of economic activity, the headquarters of agriculture and handicrafts, and foreign trade took the form of an exchange of gifts between the Cretan kings on one hand, and the Oriental and Egyptian rulers on the other. The broad similarity between the conditions obtaining in the Oriental cultures and those of Minoan Crete speaks strongly in favour of this view.

Among the earliest Sumerian societies the temples formed the principal economic units, each constituting the kernel of a community comprising not only priests, but also soldiers, herdsmen, fishermen, artisans, slaves and traders. The last were merely employees of the temple, travelling on asses belonging to it, and trafficking on its behalf. It has been claimed that from the time of the first Babylonian dynasty greater freedom prevailed, but this surmise is contradicted by the low standing assigned to artisans in the legal code of Hammurabi. In Egypt bazaars certainly existed, where private citizens bartered goods of limited value such as fruit, vegetables, poultry and fish for wares like tools, sandals and cloth. But foreign trade was the province of the king alone; he allocated the surplus for export, he provided ships and military escorts to

protect the cargoes. The temples also occasionally engaged in trade. Craftsmen belonged either to the king or to great officials, receiving their wages from their masters, not from the buyers of the goods they produced. The import of the «primary raw materials» of the period, stone, metals and timber, as well as of myrrh, olive oil and wine, depended upon campaigns waged by the royal army. The Egyptians took swords, axes and necklaces to the land of Punt (Somali land), offering them as gifts to the local gods and chieftains, who in their turn presented incense, gold, ivory, monkeys and panthers to Pharaoh as a kind of tribute.

The international correspondence of the 14th century B. C., preserved in the archives at Amarna in Egypt, confirms that Egyptian trade took the form of presents exchanged by the Pharaoh and the king and princes of Asia and Syria. So, for instance, the king of Babylon sent horses and *kyanos* (lapis lazuli) and received gold from Egypt, while the King of Alasia (probably Cyprus) sought to exchange 500 bronze talents for silver, clothing, beds and war chariots.

During periods of weak royal control, the temples engaged in trade. A priest of Ammon travelled to Byblos with gold and silver in order to buy timber to build a ship for the god. After much bargaining, the Prince of Byblos delivered the timber in return for gold, silver and clothing.

From the Old Testament we learn that Hiram, king of Tyre, sent cedarwood and pine timber to Solomon, king of Jerusalem, in exchange for wheat and olive oil. The Queen of Sheba sent gold, spices and precious stones to the same king. Other Egyptian exports of horses and chariots were sent to Solomon and the kings of Hatti and Syria. «Once in three years came the navy of Tarshish bringing the King gold and silver, elephants' tusks and apes». Such things must have reached Crete in the same way: as gifts from one king to another. This would account

for the tusks of Syrian elephants, the Cyprian copper ingots at Aghia Triadha and Zakro, and the «blue monkeys» of the Knossos frescoes.

There can be no doubt that the Cretan Palace - Sanctuary unit, with its huge store-rooms, played the same central part in economic life, agricultural production and foreign trade as the temples and the palaces of Egypt and the East. Conclusive evidence for the existence of workshops for stone masons, ivory carvers, makers of faience, and seal-cutters comes from Knossos and the other great Cretan palaces. It is well known that the polychrome Kamares ware and the late Minoan pottery of the «Palace style» were made exclusively in the royal palaces, and for their use alone. Both agricultural produce such as olive oil, wine and saffron, and the accomplished Cretan metalwork pictured in the tombs of the 15th century Egyptian noblemen, and described as «gifts from the leaders of the Kephtiu and the islands», were in all likelihood directly exported to Egypt from the Cretan palaces. These offerings are not tribute paid to Pharaoh for the granting of permission to trade with Egypt; they themselves constitute the only trade of the period. The Egyptians in return sent gold, ivory, cloth, stone vessels containing perfumes, and chariots; besides monkeys for the palace gardens and Nubians for the royal guard. Probably these negroes were not «mercenaries», as has been suggested, but slaves.

During the Neo-palatial period the waning of royal authority was apparently exploited by small autonomous «palaces», which disposed of their own artisans and, near the coast, perhaps owned private fleets with which they traded on their own account. The settlements of East Crete, such as Pseira, Gournia, Palaikastro and Zakros were surely manufacturing and commercial centres, but even here trade was probably handled on behalf of the king's representatives, or of powerful local princes. Barter took place for the

benefit of the barterers personally, not for eventual resale at a profit. In spite of the fact that metals such as gold, silver and bronze were not unknown as units of exchange, there can be no question of currency; this lack of coinage formed an obstacle to the development of genuine commercial transactions.

In Mycenaean Greece it seems that a comparable situation existed. Karamopoulos has declared that the king of Thebes was an industrialist, a farmer, and a merchant, and that he practised the crafts of potter, jeweller, glass paste maker, and goldsmith. The artisans probably belonged to the palaces; indeed, in the Pylos tablets craftsmen, such as potters and fullers are described as *wa-na-kate-ro*, «i.e. of the king». They received grants of land in lieu of wages, the raw materials for their work being provided by the king. Besides these, there were also free, possibly itinerant, artisans. Goods were distributed from the palaces, as appears again from the tablets. Homer describes Mycenaean kings, for instance *Mentes*, king of the Taphians, as making trading voyages and personally busying himself with commerce.

The undeniable concentration of the Minoan economy in royal hands makes it unlikely that much margin was left in which the public could operate independently of royal control. Nevertheless, this view has lately been supported by Professor Van Effenterre. According to him the large piazza he excavated north of the palace of Mallia was used for political rallies attended by the populace, while a pillar crypt discovered near by was, in his opinion, an assembly room and banquet hall for the leaders and representatives of the people, comparable to the *prytaneum* of later Greek cities.

This is an extremely daring speculation, but it must certainly be borne in mind that historical phenomena are often more complex than we suspect, and that other investigators, such as Ventris and Chadwick, have accepted that

the Minoan economy was a mixed one, in which free enterprise played some part, alongside the dominant role of the palace. They have observed comparable systems in Ugarit, Alalakh and the land of the Hatti, where «guilds» of the artisans followed their trade in the city bazaars; some craftsmen worked permanently for the palace, but some of the royal demands were met by hiring or purchasing, with silver, objects of local manufacture or foreign imports. To a limited extent, development along such lines cannot be excluded in Minoan Crete, but the point was never reached when the City could emerge as a free economic entity. The palaces remained the centre of economic life until the end.



CONTENTS

Foreword	6
Introductory Note on Minoan Chronology	7
1. The Neolithic and the Pre - palatial Period	
2. The Period of the Old Palaces	
Palaces, Settlements and Tombs	23
Pottery	24
The other Crafts	27
3. The Period of the New Palaces	
Palaces, Villas, Settlements	31
Minoan Colonies	39
Burials	40
Frescoes	40
Plastic Art	43
Pottery	46
Metallurgy	48
Seals	49
The Catastrophe of 1450	50
The Period of the Palace Style	52
The final Catastrophe of the Palace of Knossos	56
4. The Post - Palatial or Mycenaean Period	
The Achaean Colonization	59
Tombs	62
Frescoes and Pottery	63
Plastic Art	65
Metallurgy and Seals	66
The End	67
5. Minoan Religion	
The Vegetation Cycle and the Divinities	70
Cult Places : Caves and Peaks	78
Domestic Shrines	81
Idols	85
Tree Cult	88

Contents

Sacred Symbols	90
Altars and ritual Vessels	97
Worship and Priesthood	102
Bull Sports and other Festivals	109
Cult of the Dead	114
6. Minoan Writing	123
7. Economy and Trade	131

LIST OF PLATES

1. — A vase of the Pyrgos style.
2. — Early Minoan tomb at Lebena.
3. — Vases of the Aghios Onoufrios style.
4. — A jug of the Vassiliki style.
5. — Middle Minoan clay figurine of a votary from
Petsophà.
6. — Kamares jug from Phaestos.
The Disk of Phaestos.
7. — Gold pendant from Mallia.
A sealstone from Knossos.
8. — Medallion pithos from Knossos.
Ivory acrobat from Knossos.
9. — Jug of the Floral Style from Phaestos.
10. — Vase of the Marine Style from Palaikastro.
11. — Bronze figurine from Tylissos.
12. — The Snake Goddess from Knossos.
13. — Cow suckling her young. Knossos.
14. — Bull's head from Knossos.
15. — Head of a lioness from Knossos.
16. — Stone vase from Aghia Triadha.
17. — The Dolphin Fresco from Knossos.
18. — The «Parisienne». Fresco from Knossos.
19. — Libation vase of the Marine Style from Zakros.
20. — Palace Style amphoras from Knossos.
A clay sarcophagus from Episcope.
21. — Libation vase from Katsaba.
Idol of a Goddess from Ghazi.
22. — A sacred dance. From Palaikastro.
23. — Linear A tablets from A. Triadha.
Linear B tablet from Knossos.
24. — The Throne Room. Knossos.
25. — The West Magazines. Knossos.

26. — Colonnade of the Grand Staircase. Knossos.
27. — Theatre, West Court and West Propylon.
Palace of Phaestos.
28. — The North Wing seen from the Central Court.
Phaestos.
29. — Map of Crete.

LIST OF TEXT FIGURES

1. — Vaulted tombs at Lebena.
2. — Votive animal from the tombs of Mesara.
3. — Stone kernos from Mesara.
4. — Bronze daggers from the tombs of Mesara.
5. — Ivory seal in form of a dove with her nestlings.
6. — Jar of the Kamares style from Phaestos.
7. — «Egg - shell» cup from Knossos.
8. — Seal impression from Phaestos.
9. — Seal with representation of a wild goat.
10. — Bronze swords of the Neo - palatial period from Knossos, and swords of the Post - palatial period from Moulia.
11. — Palace of Knossos. The West Porch.
12. — Palace of Knossos. Façade of the West Wing seen from the Central Court.
13. — Palace of Knossos. The Stepped Portico and the South Façade.
14. — Palace of Knossos. Passage of the Northern Entrance.
15. — Palace of Phaestos. The Queen's Megaron.
16. — Model of a house from Knossos.
17. — Miniature fresco from Knossos.
18. — The Lily Vases from Knossos.
19. — Palace style amphora from the Harbour Town of Knossos.
20. — Palace style goblet from the Harbour Town of Knossos.

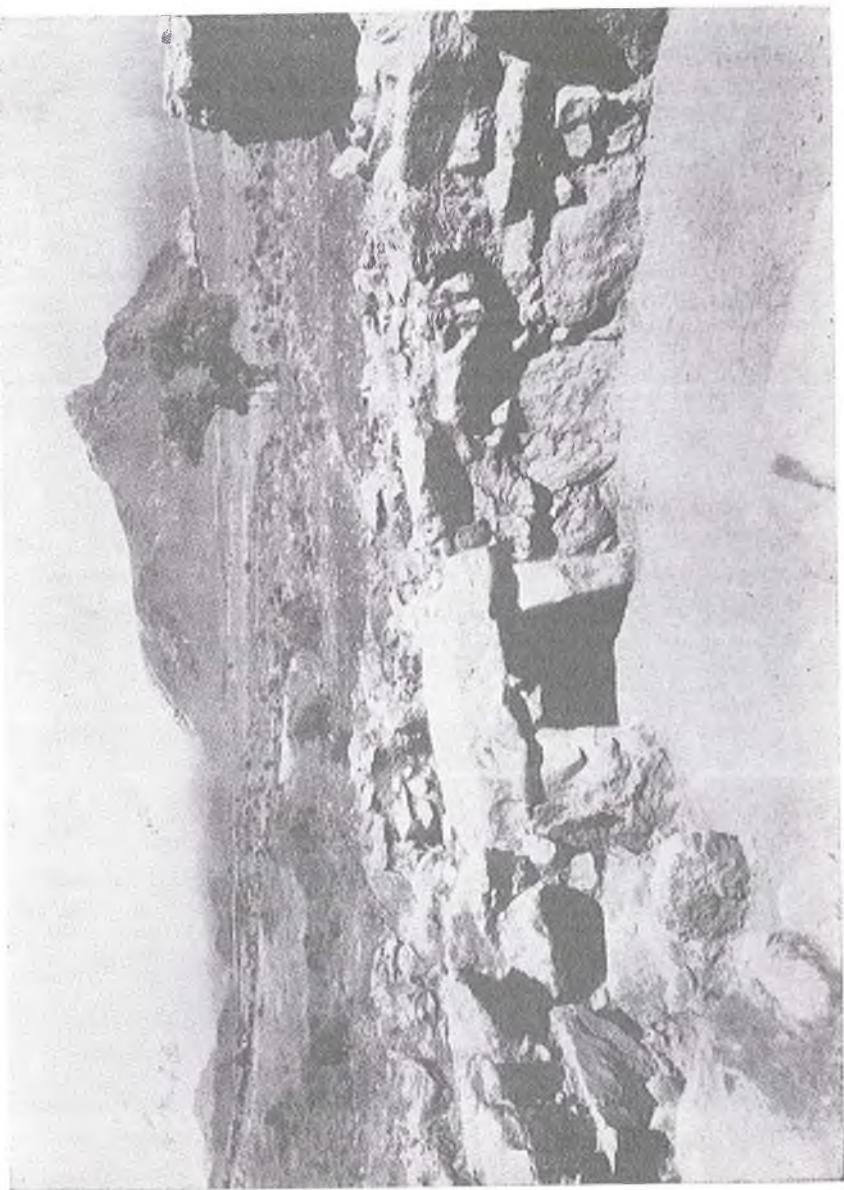
21. — Palace style jug from the Harbour Town of Knossos.
22. — Palace style alabastron from the Harbour Town of Knossos.
23. — The interior of a tomb at Pakhyammos with a clay sarcophagus, a table of offerings and a box containing the jewelry of the dead.
24. — Seal from Kydonia; the Young God grasping two lions.
25. — Seal impression from Aghia Triadha showing the Young God and a lion.
26. — Seal impression from Knossos representing the Young God.
27. — Sealing from Knossos with representation of a Goddess on a mountain peak.
28. — Seal impression from Knossos with representation of the Great Goddess.
29. — Seal from Kydonia. The Young God between a winged wild goat and a daemon.
30. — Gold ring from Mycenae representing a wild goat, a male figure and an enclosure with the Sacred Tree.
31. — Seal from the Dictaeon Cave. A Goddess between two griffins.
32. — Gold ring from Knossos with representation of the epiphany of the Young God in front of his shrine.
33. — Sealing from Knossos representing a wild goat and a child.
34. — Columnar shrine from a fresco of the Palace at Knossos.
35. — «Sheep - bell» figurine from Tylissos.
36. — Head of a Goddess from Gortyn.
37. — Priestesses adoring a Goddess seated under the Sacred Tree. Gold ring from Mycenae.
38. — Gold ring from Vaphio. A spring scene; orgiastic dance in honour of the Sacred Tree.
39. — Gold ring from Phaestos. A winter scene; uprooting of the Sacred Tree and mourning for it.

List of text figures

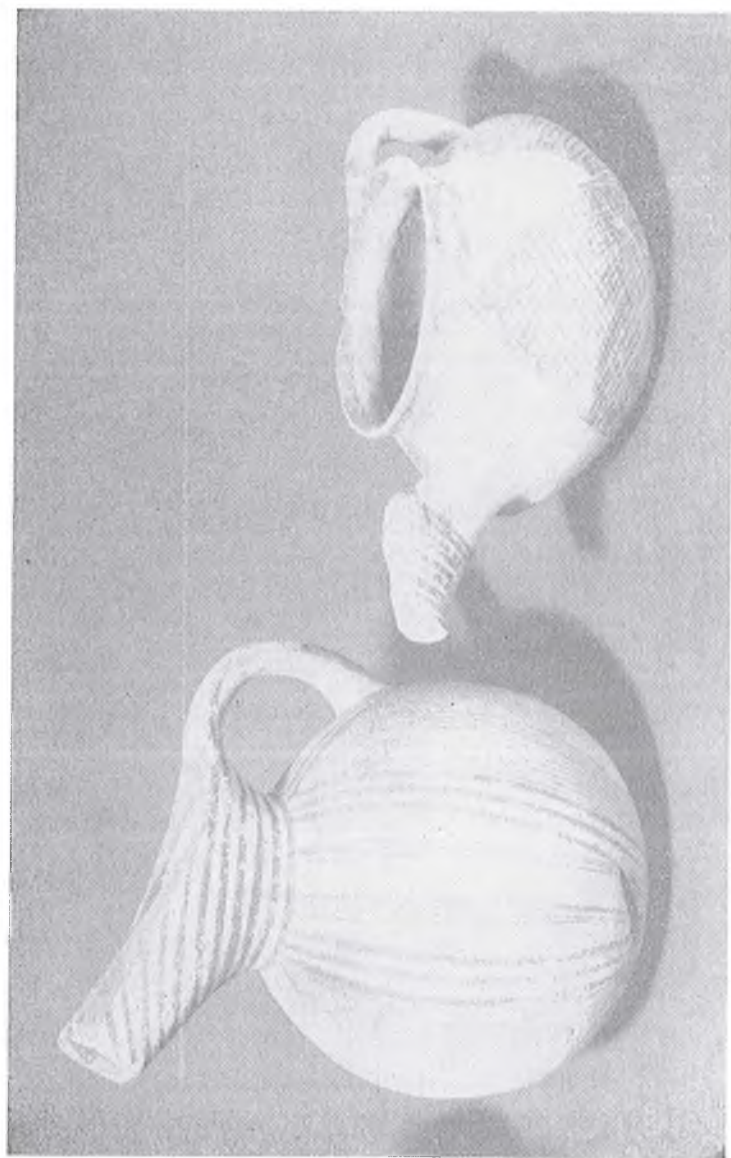
40. — Sacral horns and a Libation - Vase.
41. — Sacral Knot from Knossos.
42. — Seal from Knossos representing an armed Goddess.
43. — Ritual vessel decorated with a figure - of - eight shield.
44. — Cross and wheel from the stone mould of Seteia.
45. — Gold amulet from Aghia Triadha.
46. — Early Minoan clay kernos from Mesara.
47. — Snake tube from Gournia.
48. — Fragment of a stone vase from Knossos; offerings in front of a Shrine.
49. — Sealing from Knossos; offerings to a seated Goddess.
50. — Offering of blood accompanied by music. From the sarcophagus of Aghia Triadha.
51. — Seal impression from Zakro showing a deer - headed daemonic figure.
52. — Seal from Vaphio. Two daemons of fertility holding libation vases.
53. — Seal from the Idaean Cave. Priestess holding a triton shell.
54. — Stone fragment from Knossos showing a procession in relief.
55. — Gold ring from Mokhlos. The Vegetation Goddess on her boat.
56. — Gold ring from the Port of Knossos. Departure of a divine pair.
57. — Clay larnax from Palaikastro painted with griffins, double axes and sacred horns.
58. — The «Ring of Nestor».
59. — Signs of the Phaestos Disc.



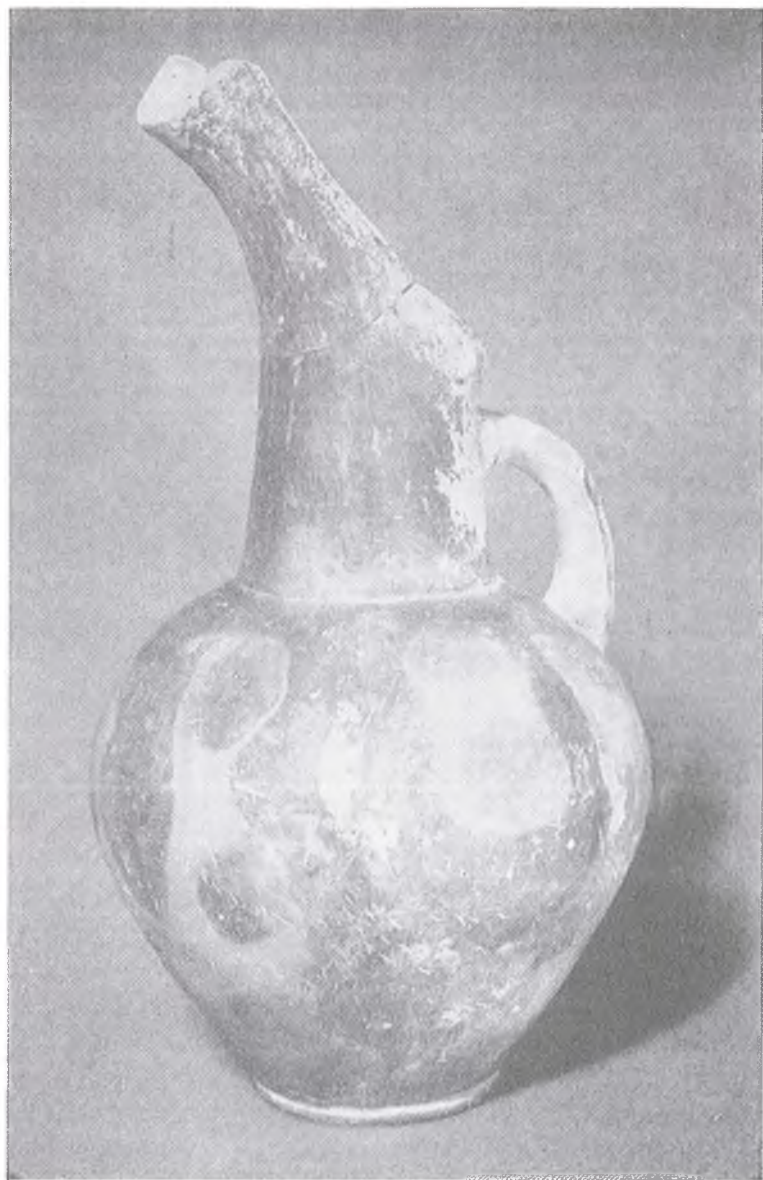
A vase of the Pyrgos style



Early Minoan tomb at Lebena



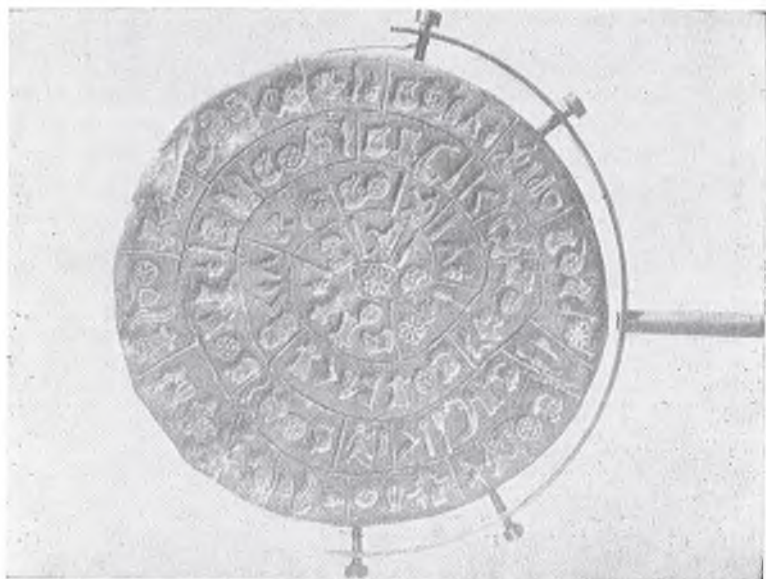
Vases of the Agios Onoufrios style



A jug of the Vassiliki style



Middle Minoan clay figurine of a votary from Petsophà



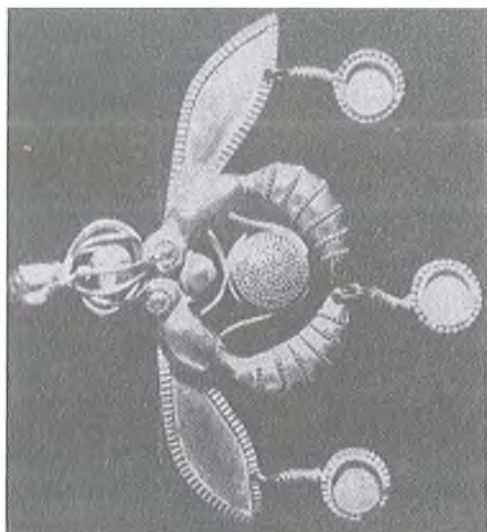
The Disk of Phaistos



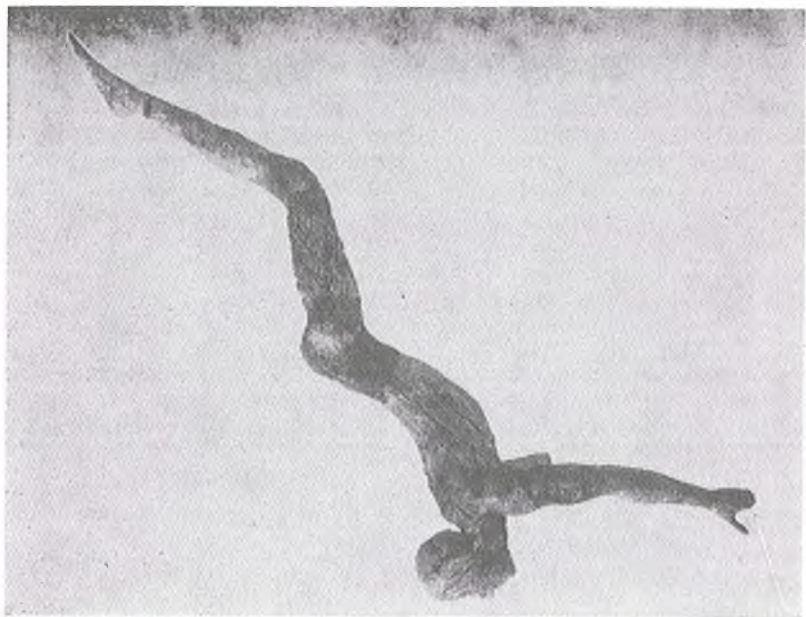
Kamarens jug from Phaistos



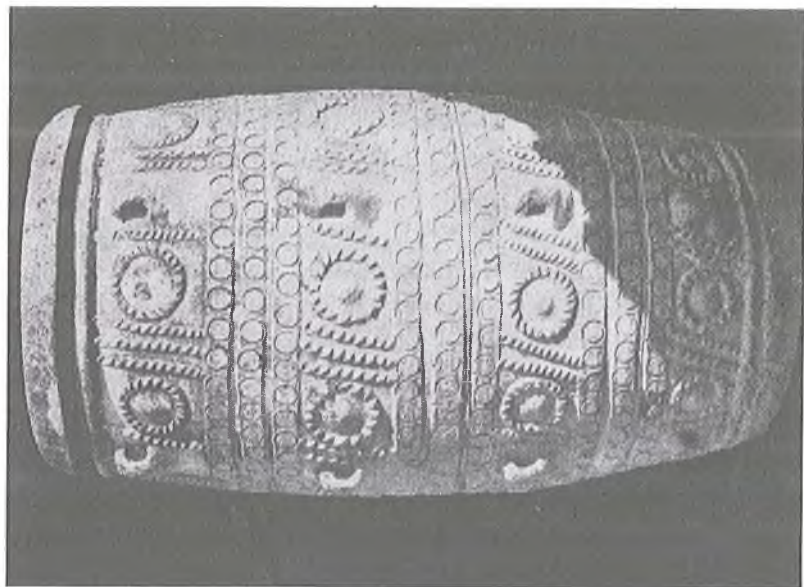
A sealstone from Ksossos



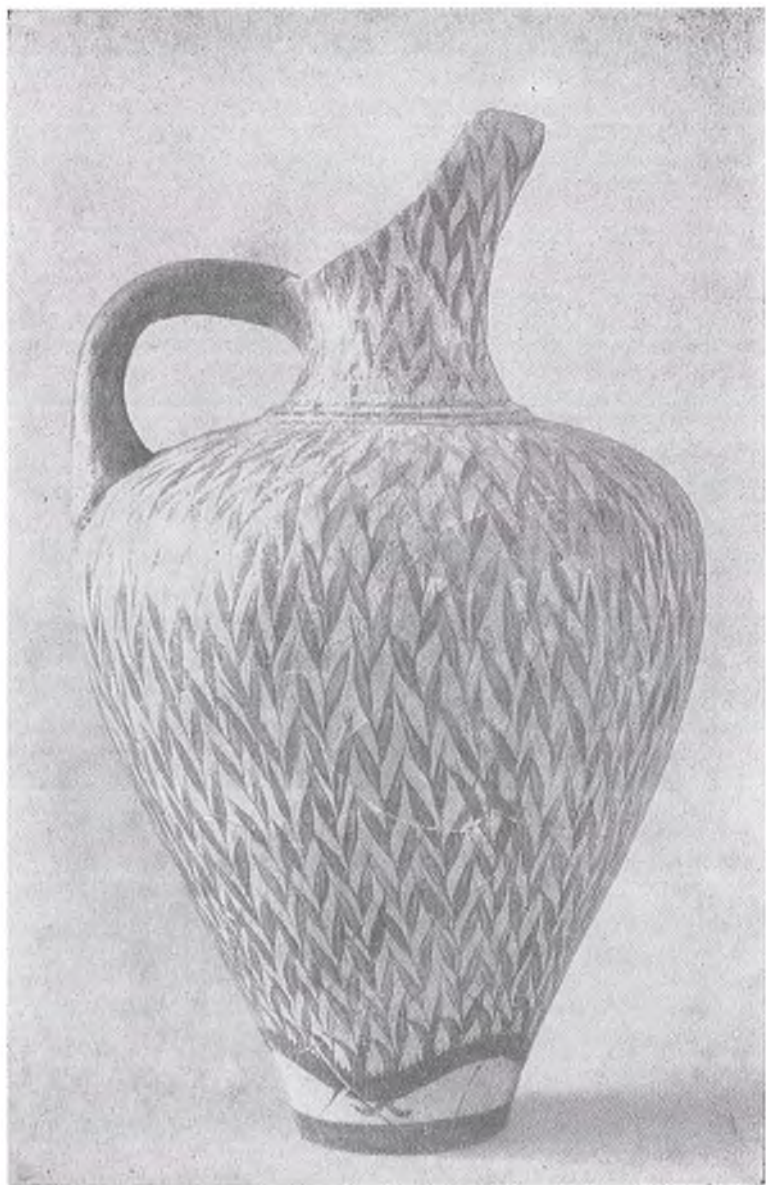
Gold pendant from Mallia



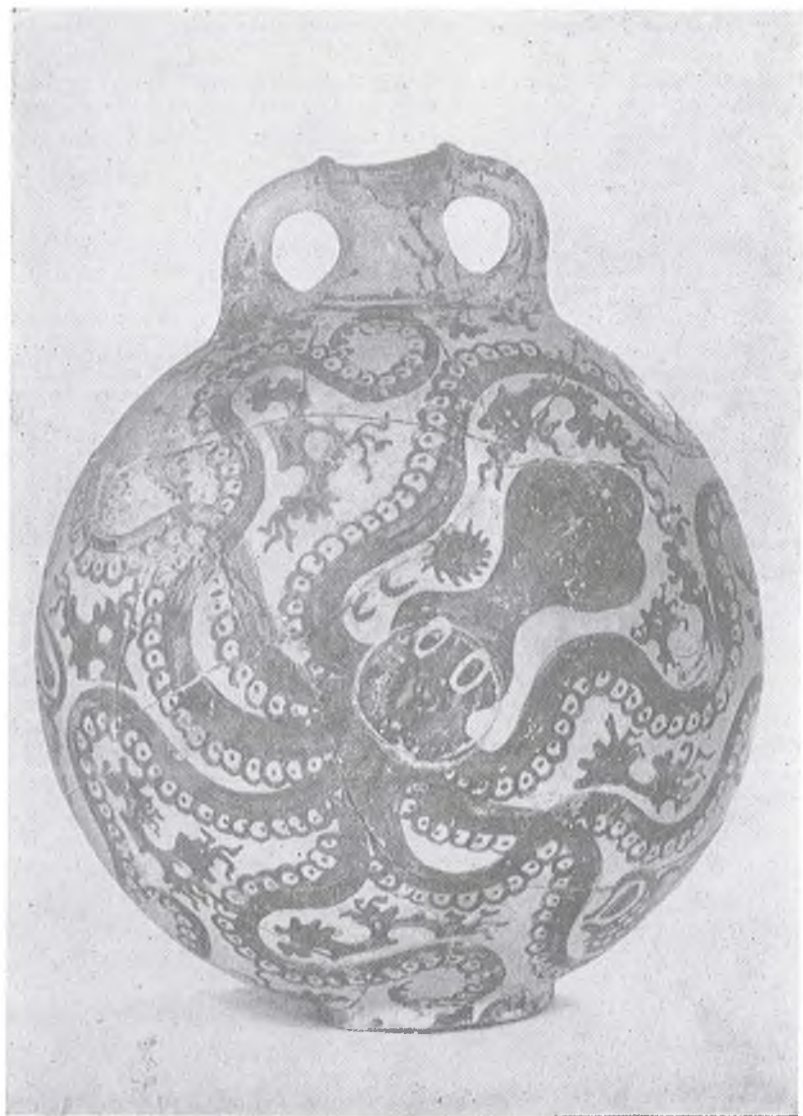
Ivory acrobat from Knossos



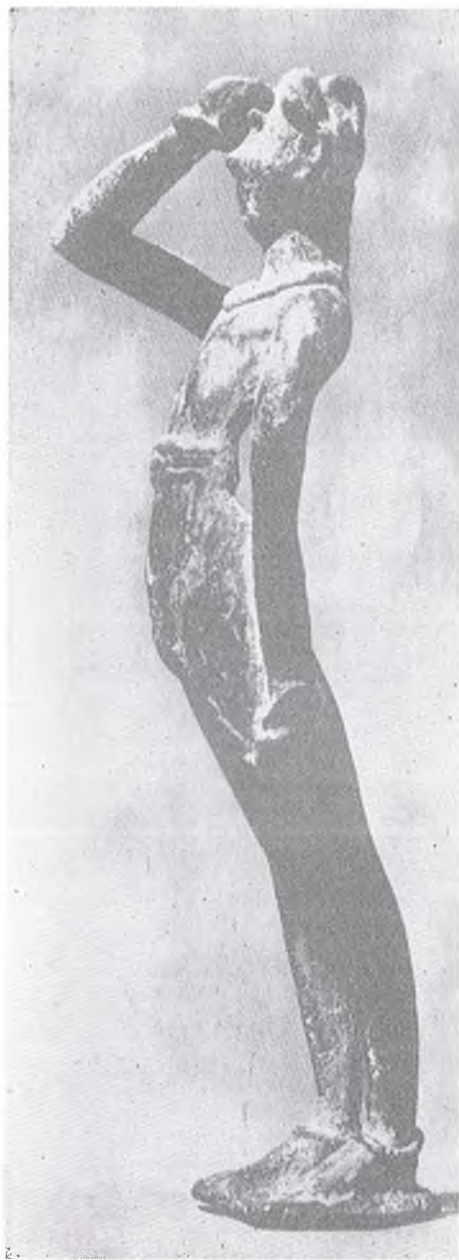
Medallion pithos from Knossos



Jug of the Floral Style from Phaestos



Vase of the Marine Style from Palaikastro



Bronze figurine from Tylosos



The Snake Goddess from Knossos



Cow suckling her young. Knossos



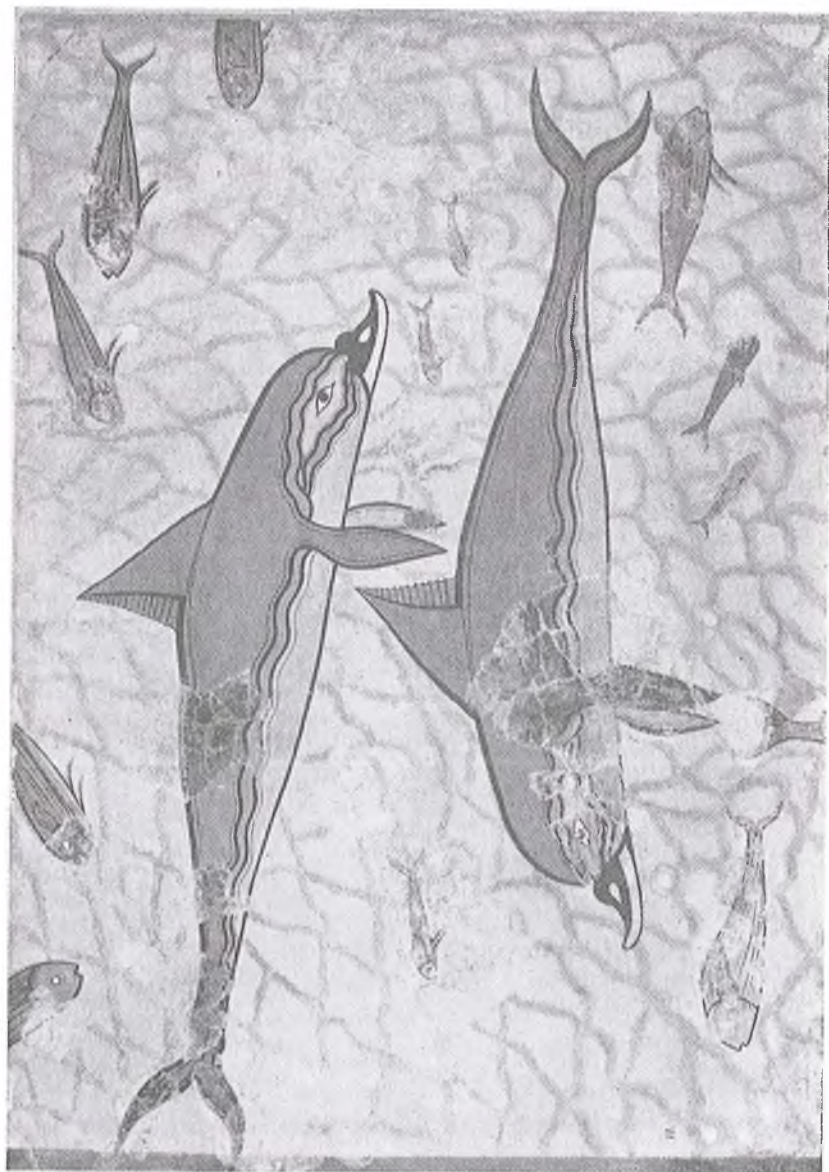
Bull's head from Knossos



Head of a lioness from Knossos



Stone vase from Agia Triadha



The Dolphin Fresco from Knossos



The «Parisienne». Fresco from Knossos



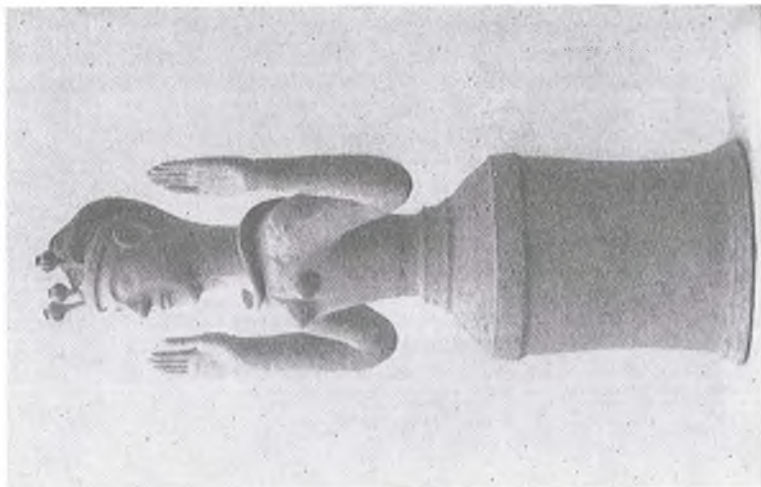
Libation vase of the Marine Style from Zakros



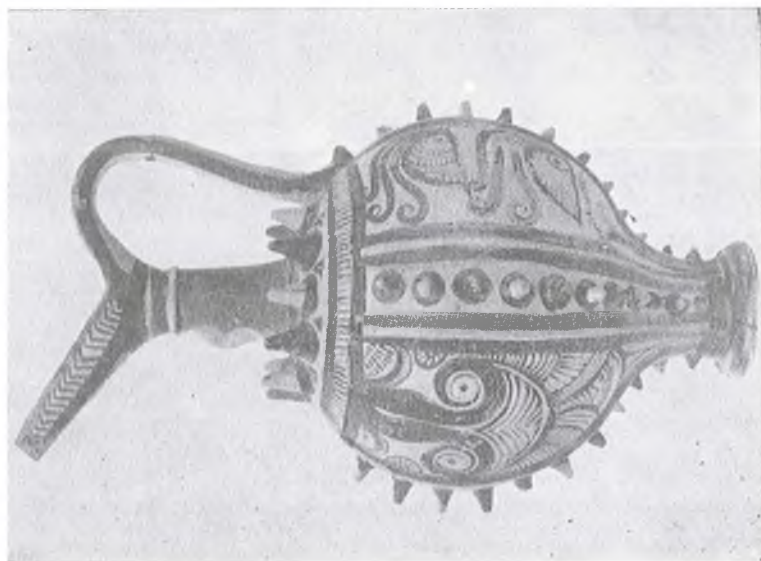
Palace Style amphoras from Knossos



A clay sarcophagus from Episcopo



Idol of a Goddess from Ghazi



Libation vase from Katsaba



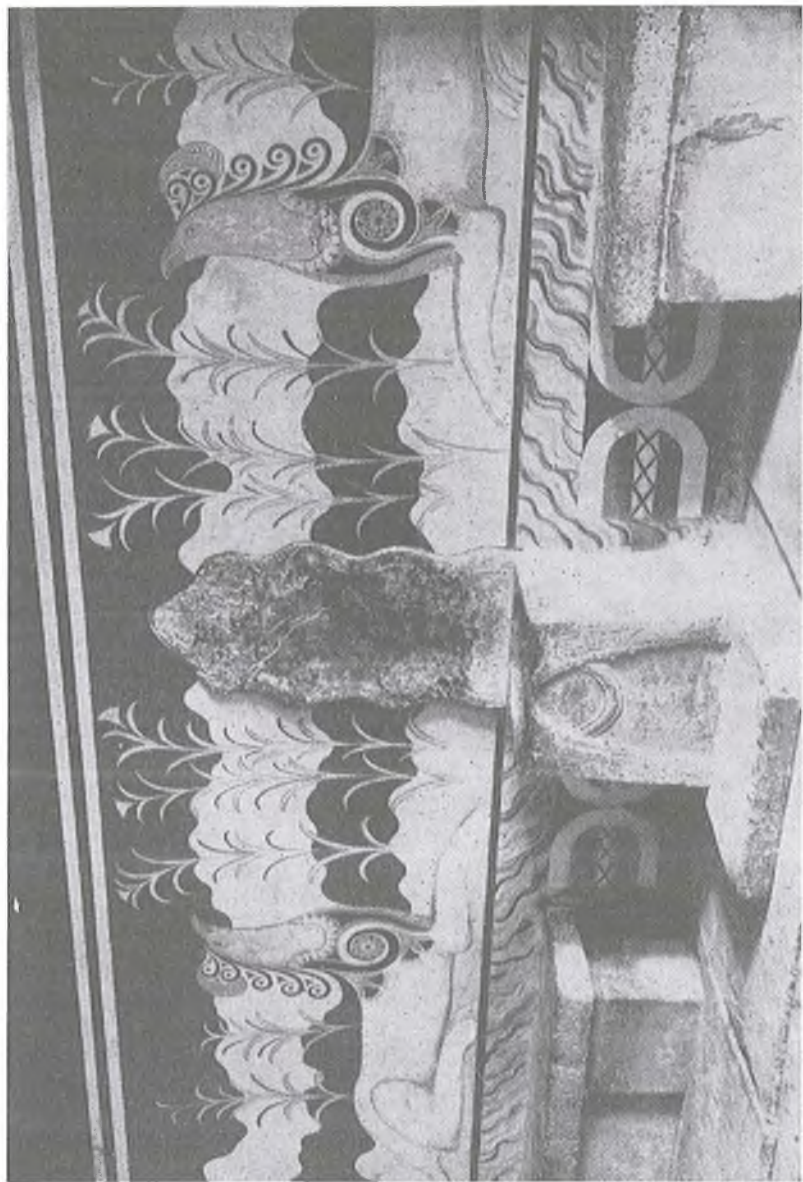
A sacred dance. From Palaikastro



Linear A tablets from A. Triadha



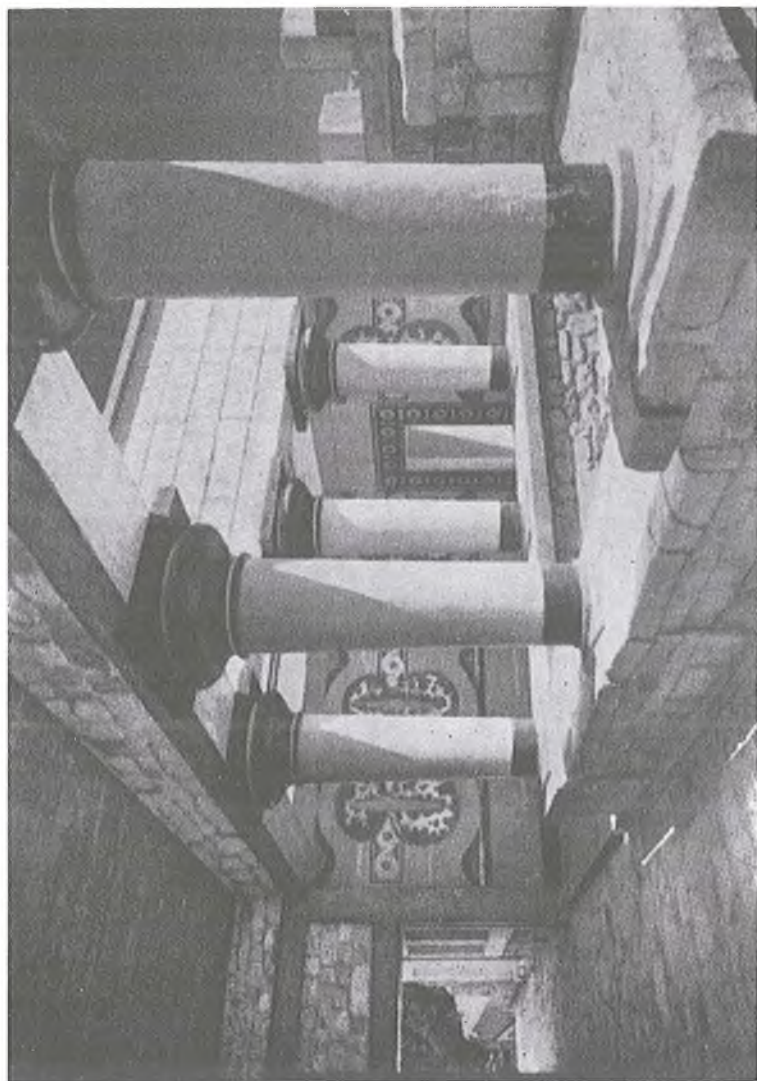
Linear B tablet from Knossos



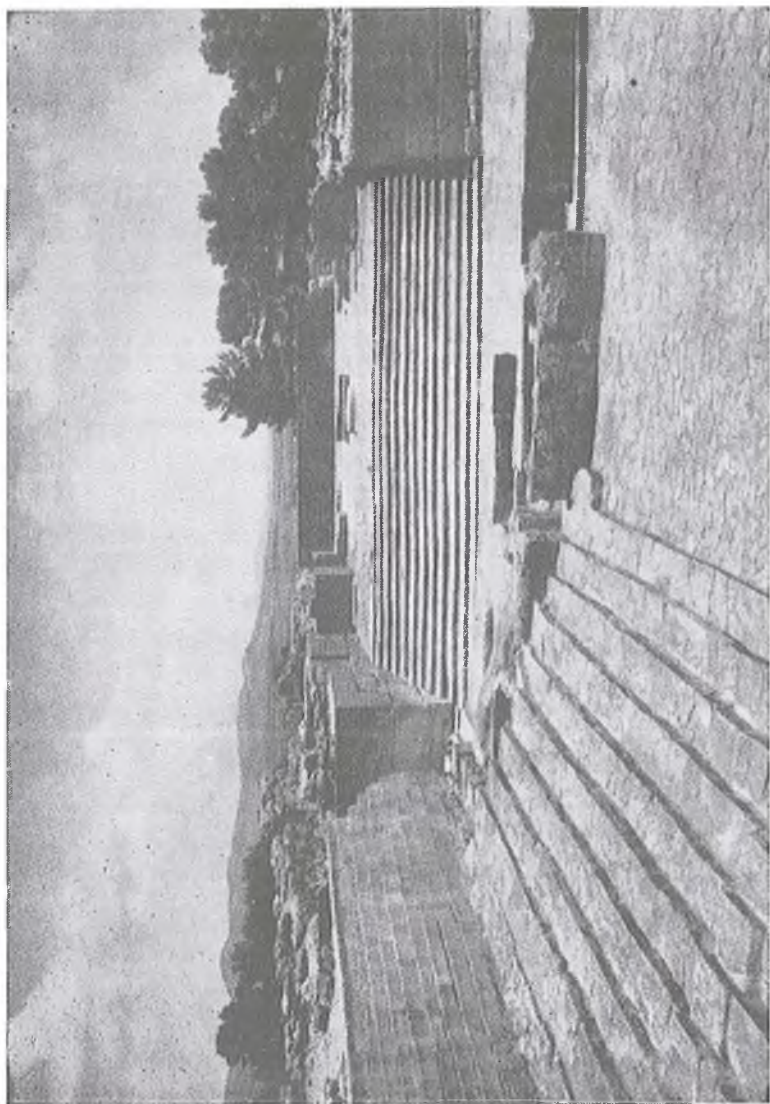
The Throne Room. Knossos



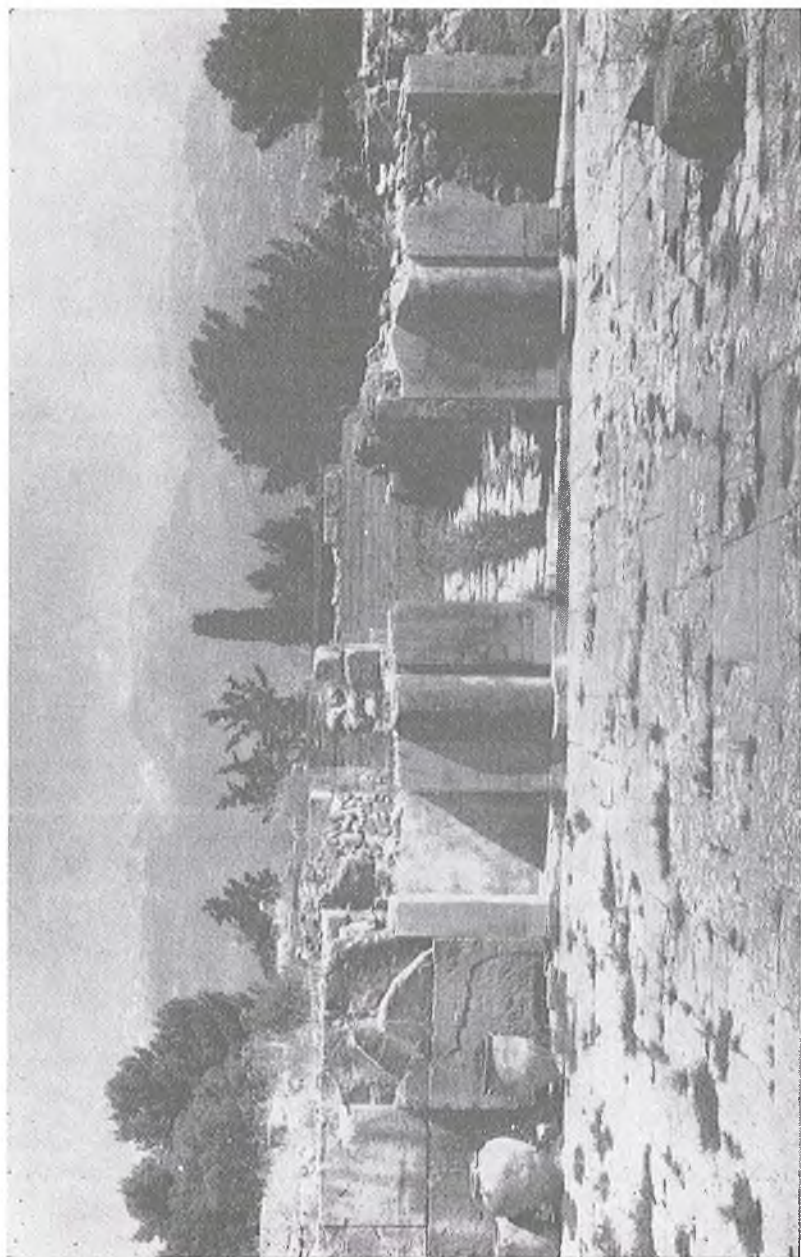
The West Magazines. Knossos



Golonnade of the Grand Staircase. Knossos



Theater West Court and West Propylon. Phaistos



The North Wing seen from the Central Court. Phaistos

MAP OF CRETE



LIBYAN SEA